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Composers of the Twentieth Century Oral History Series

David Sheinfeld

AN ORIGINAL VOICE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY MUSIC

With an Introduction by
Kent Nagano

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline C. Crawford
in 1998

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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David Sheinfeld with members of the Alexander String Quartet, circa 1997.

Patricia Ris, photographer.

Cataloguing information

SHEINFELD, David (b.1906)

Composer, Violinist

An Original Voice in Twentieth-Century Music, 1999, vi, 207 pp.

Early years in St. Louis and Chicago; education with Alexander Sebald and Ottorino Respighi; creating a string quartet; music in the 1930s; composing for NBC and a WPA theater project; studying conducting with Pierre Monteux; performing as violinist with San Francisco Symphony, 1945-1971; life and work as a composer, 1946-1999.

Interviewed 1998 by Caroline Crawford for the Composers of the Twentieth Century Oral History Series, the Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Introduction by Kent Nagano, Music Director, Berkeley and Halle Symphony Orchestras.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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PREFACE

The Composers of the Twentieth Century series of oral histories, a project of the Regional Oral History Office, was initiated in 1998 to document the lives and careers of a number of twentieth-century composers with significant California connections, the composers chosen to represent a cross-section of musical philosophies, cultural backgrounds and education.

The twentieth century in this country has produced an extraordinary disparity of musical styles and languages, and with those controversy and even alienation between composers and audiences, as composers sought to find a path between contemporary and traditional musical languages: serialism, minimalism, neoclassicism, and back to some extent to neoromanticism in the last decades. The battle of styles was perhaps inevitable, as well as the reverse pendulum swing that has followed, but as the New York Times stated in a recent article, "the polemics on both sides were dismaying."

The composers were selected with the help of university of California faculty and musicians from the greater community and asked to discuss their musical philosophies, the development of their musical language, their processes of composing, ideas about the nineteenth-century European heritage, and experiences studying with such signal teachers as Nadia Boulanger, Roger Sessions, Arnold Schoenberg, Darius Milhaud, Luigi Dallapiccola and others, university associations (Andrew Imbrie) or orchestral ones (David Sheinfeld), and forays into fields as different as jazz (Dave Brubeck), electronic music (Pauline Oliveros), and film (Leonard Rosenman). Various library collections served as research resources for the project, among them those of the UC Berkeley and UCLA Music Libraries, The Bancroft Library, and the Yale School of Music Library.

Oral history techniques have rarely been applied in the field of music, the study of music having focused until now largely on structural and historical developments in the field. It is hoped that these oral histories, besides being vivid cultural portraits, will promote understanding of the composer's work, the musical climate in the times we live in, the range of choices the composer has and the obstacles he or she faces, the avenues for writing and exposure.

Funding for the Composers of the Twentieth Century series of oral histories came in the form of a large grant from San Francisco art patroness Phyllis Wattis, to whom the Regional Oral History Office is greatly indebted. Mrs. Wattis has supported several other of the office's projects, including the histories of Kurt Herbert Adler and the

San Francisco Opera and Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to California history. The office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of The Bancroft Library.

Caroline C. Crawford
Project Director
Composers in the Twentieth Century
Series

June 1999
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

INTRODUCTION by Kent Nagano

My introduction to David Sheinfeld's music came from two sources. One was the Kronos Quartet, who were working on his string quartet, and David Harrington recommended it highly, and so it was in the back of my mind. And then there was a reception with Charles Shere, formerly a critic for the *Oakland Tribune*, and Charles introduced David to me. Having had that introduction made I made a point of finally trying to look at some of David's music, including the string quartet that the Kronos eventually performed.

My first impression on hearing the music was that it was finely crafted and distinctive. I had a much fuller reaction after I began to look at some of the scores David gave me; it was much more than distinctive--it was a very original voice, which is difficult to achieve these days, and it had a deep level of commitment and knowledge of expression through the orchestra, David having been a player for such a long time.

One thing that I feel as a performer is that David is deeply expressive through his music. It is very complicated music at times and intellectually extremely challenging at times, but the overwhelming feeling is not one of having a mental exercise but really being moved and stimulated by the expression of human emotions and spirit in David's music. Maybe one of the reasons he is still so actively involved in composing is that it is a way of expression for him.

Is David a rebel? I'm not sure I would use the word "rebel" because it implies disruption or going against something and I don't really feel that when I work with or study David's scores. I feel more an overwhelming sense that he is a very strong individual and that he will follow his own instincts, even if they happen to be in contradiction to what the prevailing trends might be. That is what I mean when I say he is one of those very rare distinctive voices today, because so much is cross-fertilized and at its worst almost fashionable; following a trend. In David's case, no one could say, as far as I can tell, that David follows a trend. One of the things one can almost surely say is that he is being true to himself, and that is different from saying that he is a rebel.

In terms of musical language, David is constantly exploring, and I think that is what probably keeps him so flexible mentally and so alive. Different elements are added to his syntax as he writes, but I feel he has a real and personal language and his pieces do have a stylistic similarity; I can feel David's personality coming through. I don't claim to be an expert--I've just seen several of his scores and done three of his works with the Berkeley Symphony, so my comments are based

on these past ten years of knowing him, and of course he is now in his nineties--still I think he does have a voice that is recognizable.

David is remarkable in many ways--he has a very young spirit and an enthusiasm that one usually equates with a person in their teens. He is just so curious and alive. He must live his life very, very well. I'm not sure how he has managed to do that--you see so many sad cases where people lose their enthusiasm. David at ninety-three has the heart and spirit of someone in their teens.

From a technical standpoint David's music is very challenging to play. In this day and age, when composers in schools are being encouraged to write music that can be practical in terms of easily rehearsed and programmed and with an appropriate length and appropriate language. David doesn't follow that philosophy at all--he writes as he feels. His imagination takes him to very complex issues. For example, in *E=Mc²* he relies upon an extremely complex language and multilayered textural syntax to express what he needs to express, and the way he writes demands a lot of rehearsal time in order to effectively perform the piece.

That being said, David has explained to me again and again in the course of rehearsals that of course the clarity of the musical text is important, but what is more important is what is expressed through that text. I've often compared David's music to a powerful and sophisticated play whereby one needs to spend time carefully pronouncing and enunciating the actual text within the play, but just speaking the words of that play would mean nothing at all--what is much more important is to express the content and David's pieces are inevitable full, full, full of exploration from the content point of view and from the spiritual point of view. I think that is what keeps drawing me and other people to his music.

His is a very rare voice in the compositional world.

Kent Nagano
Music Director
Berkeley Symphony and Halle Symphony
Orchestras

San Francisco, California
June 1999

INTERVIEW HISTORY--David Sheinfeld

David Sheinfeld represents in the Composers of the Twentieth Century oral history series the independent composer, an instrumentalist who made a long career with San Francisco Symphony and developed a voice as a composer that is original, fresh, and ever young through a life of more than nine decades.

Born in 1906 to parents who emigrated to St. Louis from Ukraine, Mr. Sheinfeld became a resident of San Francisco in 1945; his contribution to the musical life of the Bay Area as violinist, teacher and composer has been considerable. After studying composition in Rome with Ottorino Respighi in the 1930s (Respighi encouraged him to keep writing, telling him he was "pieno di fantasia"), Mr. Sheinfeld composed ballets and theater music for the WPA in Chicago, and subsequently studied conducting with Pierre Monteux, who invited him to join the Symphony's first violin section, a position he held from 1945 to 1971. During these years he composed constantly, always exploring new languages.

Our five interview sessions took place at Mr. Sheinfeld's home in the San Francisco Sunset District, scheduled always at 1 p.m. so he would have the full morning for his work. With a freshly brewed pot of jasmine tea set on the large dining room table next to the recorder we would begin three-hour sessions that were usually extended into late afternoon. He subsequently reviewed the transcripts and made only a few textual changes and additions.

The resulting history covers a long, rich, disciplined life. At ninety-three, Mr. Sheinfeld continues to compose twenty-four hours a day. "I have the audacity to create new work," he says, "and I have the responsibility."

Caroline C. Crawford
Project Director

June 1999
Regional Oral History Office
Berkeley, California

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name David Sheinfeld

Date of birth Sept. 20, 1906 Birthplace St. Louis, Mo.

Father's full name Joseph Sheinfeld

Occupation Tailor Birthplace Russia(Ukraine)

Mother's full name Feige (Sandler) Sheinfeld

Occupation House Wife Birthplace Russia(Ukraine)

Your spouse Dorothy (Taaffe) Sheinfeld

Occupation Office Manager Birthplace Chicago

Your children Daniel George Sheinfeld

Paul Erie Sheinfeld

Where did you grow up? Chicago

Present community San Francisco

Education Studied Violin Privately, Chicago, with Alexander Sebald, Music Theory with American Conservatory of Music, Arthur O. Andersen, Music Composition, Rome, with Ottorino Respighi

Occupation(s) Violinist, Composer, Teacher

D.J. Musical Analysis and advanced composition.

Areas of expertise Composer

Other interests or activities Physics-astronomy, Painting-Sculpture, World literature,

Organizations in which you are active Name

I EARLY YEARS: 1906-1921

[Interview 1: April 1, 1998] ##¹

Parents: From the Ukraine to the United States: 1898

Crawford: We'll start with your parents and grandparents, if you could tell me what you know about them. I believe they came from the Ukraine.

Sheinfeld: Well, I don't know anything about my grandparents. I shouldn't say I don't know anything, but, you see, my parents grew up in small towns in the Ukraine, not far from each other. How they actually met--well--that's probably one way in which they met.

My mother's parents were millers. They had a mill. They used to grind up the wheat, and I've heard my mother talk about that. And from that standpoint, they were relatively well-off as millers in the town.

Crawford: What was the family name?

Sheinfeld: Her family name was Sandler. Actually, that's all I really know about that. My father left Russia--the Ukraine was part of Russia at that time--to escape being in the army of the hated czar.

You know, Jews were very much persecuted at that time. He did not want to serve in the army of the czar, and so he left, and he went to London. My mother remained behind. He went to London, and I think he lived in London for about six

^{1##} This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

months or something like that, and he was not really able to find anything there.

At that time, he had some relatives--not close, but relatives and friends--who lived in St. Louis, Missouri, and apparently they urged him to come there. And he went to St. Louis.

Crawford: What year was that?

Sheinfeld: I don't know. I can sort of guess because of my oldest sister, who was about eight years older than I--my mother was pregnant with her when my father left Russia.

Crawford: Oh, so they had married already.

Sheinfeld: Oh, they were married, yes. My mother was pregnant, and so he couldn't have arrived before about seven years before I was born, and I was born in September of 1906. That is still recorded history, you know; 1906 is not that ancient! So my father apparently could have come here around 1898 or something. I'm just guessing. I don't know.

Soon after he arrived in St. Louis, he got a job, and he sent for my mother, and so my mother arrived. When she arrived, she arrived with a little girl. That was my older sister.

Learning English and Adjusting to Life in St. Louis

Crawford: What did they tell you about St. Louis, then, as a community?

Sheinfeld: I was born in St. Louis.

Crawford: Yes. How welcoming was it? And how difficult a transition was it for them?

Sheinfeld: They never spoke about that. Both of them went to night school to learn English. I must say that they didn't feel that they wanted to just hold onto their language, which, I'm sorry to say, some of the Hispanics want to do--and I think it's a terrible mistake. I mean, they have a wonderful language, and by all means hold onto it and let your children know that and read it. But they have an opportunity to learn another language. They shouldn't regard that as an imposition.

Crawford: I agree.

Sheinfeld: They should regard that as an opportunity. Well, my parents went to night school, and they learned English. My mother's English was never as good as my father's because she stayed home. Later we did not live in a Jewish neighborhood, but in the earliest years, we lived in a Jewish neighborhood, so my mother was probably speaking Yiddish more often than English, and she stayed home. In fact, I remember very distinctly that I used to generally speak Yiddish with my mother and English with my father.

Crawford: So she was most comfortable in Yiddish.

Sheinfeld: She was more comfortable in Yiddish, but she could speak English and read and write English, although--this is a memory, since you want to know--when she read, she read in Yiddish. I will come to that. But they took the trouble of learning the language. And one thing they did not do, and I personally am sorry that they didn't do it--they did not speak Russian. They so much hated the czar and hated the conditions in Russia at that time.

Crawford: What did they say about that, in your memory?

Sheinfeld: Well, first of all, you know that often there were what were called pogroms. That was all of a sudden people would come into the Jewish quarters and loot and murder and rape and so on and so forth. And they got away with it. In fact, it was actually encouraged unofficially by the government, you know. So my parents just simply hated that. And I regret that they did not speak Russian.

Crawford: Had they come from Kiev or around Kiev?

Sheinfeld: Oh, no. They sometimes mentioned Kiev, but they didn't live there. There is a city called Zhitomir; where it is actually in the Ukraine I'm not sure but that was the sort of large city for them in the district where they lived. And I sometimes heard them mentioning that. They did sometimes talk about Kiev, but as I say, they would not speak in Russian.

Keeping a Kosher House and a Belief in Socialism

Sheinfeld: I have early memories of my father--my father was a tailor, like [Georg Frederic] Handel's father. He was a tailor. At

the time that I am talking about now, I was already--I must have been about five years old or whatever. I know I wasn't yet either six or seven because at that time, when I was ready to go to school, we no longer lived in a Jewish neighborhood, so I know I was younger than that.

But my father had a tailor shop. At night, he would still work--and we lived in the back of the store, right there.

Crawford: What was the neighborhood like?

Sheinfeld: I don't remember. I mean, we were in St. Louis. That's all I remember. And it was a Jewish neighborhood. I have a memory of this: My mother kept a kosher house. My father was a very secular person. But my mother kept a kosher house, and whether she kept it out of her own principles or not, I don't know. But I think she was sort of, in our house, a bit embarrassed about that because, as I say, my father was very secular. In all the time that I remember him--I don't know what he may have done as a younger person--but in all my memories of him, he never once stepped into a synagogue. Never once. My mother claimed that she kept a kosher house because she had promised her mother that she would do it.

Crawford: She came from a religious background.

Sheinfeld: Apparently. But she also in one sense was not religious. My parents were socialists, Democratic socialists, the kind who have been governing in the Scandinavian countries for many years. They believed--I think I've already said this to you--they believed that a time would come, and they thought it would happen under international socialism, when all men, as they put it, would be brothers and there would be absolutely no distinction whatsoever of race or color.

And I grew up with that kind of belief myself. They may have been naive in thinking that this would happen under socialism, but I will say another thing, too, that that kind of naivete is much more practical than the so-called practical world we live in today, because we had better learn to get along together and to live together, whether we like it or not, or there's going to be a great deal of trouble. We're living in a time when, rightly so, people are demanding recognition as human beings and will no longer accept being considered inferior by anyone.

High Jewish Holidays

Sheinfeld: But, you see, my parents firmly believed that, so that made my mother much more secular in that respect. She was not governed by any kind of religious prejudices. But on the High Holidays --Passover, Rosh Hashonah--you know what Rosh Hashonah is?

Crawford: Yes.

Sheinfeld: It's the Jewish New Year. And ten days afterwards, the holiest of all Jewish holidays, Yom Kippur, the Day of Repentance. On those three occasions, my mother would go to the synagogue. She went, not my father.

Crawford: And not you.

Sheinfeld: And not me. I distinctly remember because my father knew when the services would be over because he would take me and we would go to the particular synagogue. We never waited long, and then people started coming out. And I remember--remember, this was a Jewish neighborhood we lived in--so afterwards, I remember that my parents would go to a street where there was one Jewish delicatessen after another and one Jewish bakery after another, and they were in competition with each other, so when you got corned beef or pastrami it was hot and it was very good. And they would get some of that, and then they would go into a bakery and buy a couple of kinds of Jewish rye bread, and then we'd go home. And I still remember that.

Crawford: Keeping a kosher household--does that apply to more than just food?

Sheinfeld: No, that was food. That was just food.

Crawford: Food that was produced through the kosher methods.

Sheinfeld: I remember--first of all, they had ways of slaughtering animals, a special way. And then my mother used to soak the meat in water for a while because Jews have very strict rules. They must not have blood; they must not eat blood. So that is one of the elements of being kosher. And on Passover, you're not supposed to use the dishes or pots or pans that you use during the rest of the year. There are separate dishes and separate pots and pans, and there are certain kinds of food that one does not eat.

I remember I used to tease my mother, although I think she knew I was teasing her, but this was already when I was quite a bit older, and I was of course the agnostic, you know, so I would tell my mother, in Passover, I would say that I would go out to some restaurant [laughter] and order ham on matzohs. You know what matzohs are?

Crawford: Yes, unleavened bread, isn't it?

Sheinfeld: Unleavened bread. And during Passover you don't eat regular bread. So I used to tell her that I would have ham on matzohs. Well, she knew I was teasing her. At least I hope so because she was a very sweet person.

Father's Tailoring Business and Reading Aloud

Sheinfeld: Well, anyway, I remember my earliest memories were of my father--I started to tell you this before. They would pull down the shades of the shop, but he would still work at night. I remember that he would sit on what I, with my child's eyes, thought was a very big table. I'm not sure if it was as big as I thought. And he would sit on that table, tailor-wise, with his knees crossed, the way a tailor sits, you know, and he would be sewing.

My mother would read to him. And I was allowed to be there. I was always fascinated by literature, and I loved to hear my mother read--she would read in Yiddish. She would read all kinds of things. But really an excellent thing, the first [Henrik] Ibsen that I ever heard in my life was in Yiddish. And she used to read Charles Dickens in Yiddish. When I was growing up and I began to read for myself, I discovered that somebody had translated Charles Dickens into English! [laughter]

Crawford: You wouldn't imagine it would be in English-to-Yiddish, would you?

Sheinfeld: Well, I heard all kinds--Ibsen was a big deal in our house. My mother used to read Ibsen to my father and me in Yiddish, and I heard Charles Dickens, and I also heard the great Yiddish writers, and they were great writers from what were called the *shtetl*, the little towns where Jews practically predominated in Russia, wherever. And there were great writers like Sholom Aleichem. Do you know that name?

Crawford: Oh, yes.

Sheinfeld: Sholom Aleichem means peace unto you, actually. That's what it means. Sholom means peace. That was a pseudonym. And I.L. [Isaac Loeb] Peretz, another writer. There were some great writers at that time. My mother used to read those stories.

Crawford: Where did the ideas about socialism come from?

Sheinfeld: Well, socialism goes back quite a while, quite a long time, and there were different forms of it. [George] Bernard Shaw, G.B.S., was a socialist.

Crawford: Yes. I just wondered how your parents came by it in that part of the world.

Sheinfeld: Oh! I would say that they came by it because they were persecuted in Russia, so they joined underground movements, which were not permitted. But they obviously became socialists for that reason. I still remember our heroes were--for instance, there was a man and this goes back many years--there was a man by the name of Eugene V. Debs. He was a hero in our house. I remember my parents going to hear him speak, and we were up very close, and there was this man. I still remember him as very thin and with bony knees, and I'm sure I'm not wrong. He was wearing a dark suit, and it was quite shiny. It had had a lot of wear. And he obviously couldn't afford a better suit.

I remember him sort of leaning over on his knees and talking to people, and this was Debs--my parents always voted for Debs. We were one of the few oddballs who voted for a person who never had the slightest chance of being elected at all.

And then I think they voted for Norman Thomas, who became the perennial socialist candidate for president. So I still remember that. As I say, I think I must have heard all this at night--of course, it can work two ways. Maybe I was allowed by my parents to be up at night and to listen to my mother reading because they realized that I was fascinated by it; or maybe I became fascinated by literature, hearing my mother read.

Reading the Harvard Classics and Writing

Sheinfeld: When I was old enough to go to school, I remember that on weekends, on the last day of school, Friday, I would immediately go to the library and get an armful of books and bring them home and read them over the weekend, and I would read all kinds of things--and good literature. I would read poetry, and I would read just all kinds of things.

And as I child I already wrote little stories, and I wrote poetry, and I have a distinct memory--now, I really don't know what kind of a play I had written, but I wrote a little play about Columbus that we did in my class. I was either in first grade or second grade or third grade, whatever, in school. And my teacher had us act out that play in our classroom--

Crawford: So you were already a published playwright, at age six!

Sheinfeld: As far as I know, it's the only play that I have ever written, and it has unfortunately disappeared. [laughter]

But I also wrote lots of stories and poetry. It sort of came natural to me to do that. I was fascinated. I was actually a very well-read person. I was an omnivorous reader. By the time I was in my early twenties, I had read through a great deal of--I think that collection is still around--the Harvard Classics. And I had read, oh, most of the great English novelists.

Crawford: Did you read the Russian novelists?

Sheinfeld: Before I was thirty, I had read Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and I had read *The Brothers Karamazov* of [Feodor Mikhailovich] Dostoevski. The very first book of Dostoevski that I ever read and that brought me in contact with him, and I found it at that time rather shocking, was *Crime and Punishment*, if you know the novel.

Crawford: Yes, I know it.

Sheinfeld: And right away, it starts out immediately with this man murdering his landlady with this hatchet or whatever, and I remember being shocked by it.

Crawford: Raskolnikov?

Sheinfeld: Raskolnikov. But anyway, I had read all of this literature, and I had read French novelists. I had read *Don Quixote*, I had read--I guess this was--no, it was even before I went to Italy. I went to Italy in '29, when I was twenty-three years old. And I had at that time already read *The Divine Comedy* of Dante. I read it in English at that time. But I since then have read it in Italian. But I had read it. And in those days I knew German quite well, and I had read Goethe's *Faust* in the original German. So when I was sort of in my middle and certainly no later than my late twenties, I was a very well-read person.

Crawford: Do you consider yourself self-taught? You talk as if you are self-taught. In other words, the exposure to all of these literary classics was by your own doing, not through school so much.

Sheinfeld: Yes, that's right.

School in St. Louis

Crawford: What was your school like? What do you remember?

Sheinfeld: I'm sorry. I have some problems. Here, this will be better. I turned up my hearing aid.

Crawford: I just wanted to back up and ask you about your schooling in St. Louis and later, Chicago.

Sheinfeld: Okay. Now, I remember this from my school in St. Louis: At this time, when I was ready to go to school, we were living in a neighborhood which in those days we called Bohemian. You know, Czechs. In those days we called them Bohemians. They were Bohemians and Germans, and we lived in that neighborhood. My father had a tailor shop at one end of the block, and the school, the very first school that I ever went to, was at the opposite end of the block. I didn't even have to get off any curbs or cross any streets or anything.

I remember his taking me to school and telling the teacher--because I was naturally left-handed--telling the teacher, or asking her, to see to it that I wrote with my right hand and not with my left hand.

Crawford: I'm left-handed as well.

Sheinfeld: Yes, but nowadays people are left-handed and they write with their left hands. But in those days, that was not considered proper, so I grew up writing with my right hand. And I still remember that my father told the teacher about that. So that was the first school I went to, and therefore I couldn't have been any older than about seven.

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Sheinfeld: In any case, that was in St. Louis. And then I think we moved to a neighborhood which was not far from the Mississippi River. I can still remember sometimes on a Sunday my parents and I would go down towards the river, and we would look across the river to what was called East St. Louis, Illinois, and there were people lined up there, looking across the river [laughing] at St. Louis. I still have that memory.

And I have a memory of a flood, and the flood really came all the way up to our street and up to the top of the curb. It never got into our house, but I remember that we kids thought that was great, and we took off our shoes and stockings and went wading right in the middle of the street. We thought that was just great--

Crawford: Hot summers.

Moving to Chicago (1915) and First Music Lessons

Sheinfeld: Yes, very hot. When I was almost nine, my father wasn't making out well at that time. That poor man, he worked awfully hard. But anyway, he went to Chicago and he got a job there. He was gone only about a week or two, and then we came to Chicago. And so I lived in Chicago from the time that I was about nine years old.

Crawford: And you had started studying violin?

Sheinfeld: Actually, I had begun to study the violin in St. Louis, and I remember that for a long time, because I was a leftie normally, my violin teacher said that all I should do is hold the violin in my left hand and just play on the open strings. That was the first thing that happened. But anyway, I was playing the violin, and I think I started around the time that I was seven or eight.

My parents noticed that I had a musical talent. They would notice that if we were at some theater or something and we heard some tune, when I came home I would sit at the table, pretend that I was playing the piano and sing the whole tune. I would remember all of it.

So they began giving me violin lessons, and I was playing the violin, therefore, when we arrived in Chicago. And that became--that was my hometown. I grew up in Chicago. That is where I really had my principal violin teachers. One of them was my teacher for a number of years. He was the associate concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony.

Crawford: What was his name?

Sheinfeld: Zhukovsky. I think that was his name. Anyway, he was my teacher. He was considered very good. But then we were told about this Hungarian violinist and teacher by the name of Alexander Sebald, who was supposed to be very special. I was at this time sixteen years old. We switched to this teacher, and he really took to me, and he thought that I was very talented.

Hard Times for the Family

Sheinfeld: Not long after I had started studying with him, things were really quite difficult at home, I mean economically speaking. My parents were poor people. They made out. We always had enough food to eat. Nobody went hungry. In fact, plenty--we could overeat. But they really had to make out. They had a hard time of it.

Crawford: What brought about the move to Chicago? Was that your father's business?

Sheinfeld: That was because he just wasn't making out well enough--and he had acquaintances in Chicago, and they told him to come. And right away he got a job. But from then on, he did not have his own business--he worked for other people.

Crawford: Was that better?

Sheinfeld: Well, for a while, although I can remember it was always difficult for them. I came from a poor background. They were poor. They were very sweet; they were decent people, honest people. My father was willing to work as hard as he possibly

could. My mother was always reading. She was at home. She took care of the house and cooked and so on. And she was always reading. And she became, actually, quite sickly. She was very ill. And I learned to cook. She would tell me what to do, and I would often cook the dinner.

Crawford: Were there siblings? There was a sister. Brothers and sisters?

Sheinfeld: I had two older sisters.

Crawford: That's interesting that you were the cook.

Sheinfeld: But they--I don't know. Somehow, they had their own independent lives. My older sister was a very nice person. She was killed in an accident at a very early age, and she had two very young children that were left. She had gotten off the streetcar and I guess had started walking, and maybe they weren't careful enough, whatever. And a car came, was coming along (as I know the story), and she pushed the children into safety and she, herself, was killed.

My middle sister somehow--we were never close. I can't even say why. But we just never were close. But they had their own lives, so I was the one at home. And remember, I was always practicing the violin, you know, so I was at home. My older sister, who was, as I say, about eight years older, I imagine that she had some kind of a job or was working or something.

Crawford: How much older was your older sister?

Sheinfeld: About eight years older.

Crawford: Eight years. And then four years?

Sheinfeld: And four years. We were really four years apart.

Crawford: Which is a lot when you're growing up.

Sheinfeld: Yes, I was much closer with my older sister because I was her little brother, and so she was very fond of me. I remember that. But I was at home, and so I was the one who used to do a lot of cooking.

But otherwise, when my mother was well, she was always reading. She was an omnivorous reader and I'm sure read very good books because, as I say, when I was young I remember her reading Ibsen and so on, and Tolstoy and Dostoevski. Those

works, you know. I presume that my mother read them in Russian. I do not know. But they refused to speak Russian, as I told you. This was a cardinal principle in the house. They would not speak Russian. They detested everything about Russia, and they left it behind, and that was it.

I still remember that there was one book that I, myself, read in Yiddish. It's the one book I remember reading through. I think it was an Ibsen play. In those days, I was able to read in Yiddish. I have since almost entirely somehow forgotten that.

Crawford: Lack of practice.

Sheinfeld: I think if I tried to speak Yiddish with someone, it would be a very broken Yiddish. But I remember reading that book.

My father was a reader, too. When he would come home from work, he would read, so I grew up in that kind of an environment and that kind of an atmosphere. As I say, I also loved literature. I was fascinated by it from early days.

Music Lessons or Schooling: Leaving School at Thirteen

Sheinfeld: And you know what else I forgot to say to you? That I became, even as a very young person, very fascinated by the ancient Greek literature. I read Plato's *Dialogues*. One of the ones that I read--and I could never succeed in reading through it without bursting into tears, was the one where Socrates decides that he will not leave the jail cell. He was in jail, you know. You know?

Crawford: Oh, yes.

Sheinfeld: And the Athenians would have been quite happy to have him leave, and the jail cell would "inadvertently," quote-unquote, be left open so that he could escape. But he had to accept exile from Athens, and to leave Athens, that was the one light in a dark world. If you left Athens--

Crawford: You left life.

Sheinfeld: You left life. So he absolutely refused. And his friends are with him and are pleading with him to leave, and he won't. So he drinks the hemlock, the poison, and he begins to describe to his friends how he feels. And on the one hand, he said that if

there is nothing after death, then, well, that's it. It'll be forever a dreamless sleep. But if not, then he expected to meet many interesting people in Hades. And I remember, even as a young person, I could never read that without bursting into tears. It made me sad because he was sort of a hero of mine.

Crawford: Did you read in Greek?

Sheinfeld: No. I was not like John Stuart Mills. You know, John Stuart Mills' father was terribly disappointed in little John because at the age of three he still couldn't read Greek.

Crawford: Yes! Do you remember I.F. Stone?

Sheinfeld: Oh, sure.

Crawford: He learned Greek not too long before he died and wrote about the trial of Socrates.

Sheinfeld: I never learned the original Greek, but I was fascinated by Greek literature. I read most of Sophocles and Aeschylus, most of the great Greek tragedies, and Aristophanes' comedies and so on and so forth when I was very young. I think I was in my early teens, and this was fascinating for me. And Herodotus' history and so on and so forth. So I was at that time tremendously fascinated by Greek literature and grew up with that kind of a feeling.

And I read a great deal of Plato. I read many of the *Dialogues*. I remember the one in which--I forget--was it called *The Alcibiades*? Socrates was apparently a bisexual person, and he fell in love with this young boy, Alcibiades. I remember in one of the dialogues they are teasing Socrates about this.

But I also remember his methods of arriving at truth, and talking with people and finally catching them and getting them to admit the truth, or whatever. I looked up to him--he was sort of a hero of mine. Of course, this was Plato writing about Socrates because Socrates--I don't know if he ever wrote anything. That was called the peripatetic philosophy. You know, walking around and talking.

And I read some of Aristotle, but he was never a favorite of mine, actually.

Crawford: You obviously did this outside of school. We're talking about your teenage years now.

Sheinfeld: Oh, this was outside of school. I mean, in school I don't recall that we were--for heaven's sakes, I knew all of the Greek tragedies and so on. I don't think that anything like that came up in school.

Crawford: I read that you said if you hadn't been a musician, you would have been an astrophysicist.

Interest in Physics: Einstein, Sir James Jeans, Arthur Eddington

Sheinfeld: That's right. And when I was about in my middle teens, I became very much interested in astronomy and physics. In those days we were now, of course, living in Chicago, and we took a train for about thirty minutes or maybe an hour at the most to visit friends. I was now in my late teens, but I had become interested much earlier in astronomy and physics. But we would go to a place called the Indiana Sand Dunes, which were right on the shore of Lake Michigan.

These friends had little cottages which had no electricity at all. But they would have little cottages and we'd go there on a weekend. And at night we would lie by the shore of Lake Michigan and look up. I would look up at the stars and just see them. I mean, you could almost touch them, you know. And I knew every one, every one of the constellations.

Crawford: This you had studied by yourself?

Sheinfeld: Yes.

Crawford: So school was not all that important to you.

Sheinfeld: Well, I have to tell you. One big mistake that my parents made--of course, they meant it well, but it was a big mistake. When I graduated from elementary school, and I was either twelve or thirteen, my parents wanted me to be a violinist. My father came to me and he said that he would give me a choice. As I say, that was a great mistake, but he would give me a choice: I could go on to high school, but if I did then he would not pay for any violin lessons and not have me study because he felt that I couldn't do both, and so on and so forth.

So I chose the violin. But I should not have. As a boy of twelve or thirteen, I should have had both--I mean, that was a big mistake.

So from the time that I was about thirteen years old, I no longer went to school. The fortunate thing is that I had this great feeling for being educated, and I would read all of these Harvard Classics--how we came to have the Harvard Classics from the time that I was about sixteen or so, how we came to have them in the house, I don't know.

But, you know, I read through those books. And I read everything I could get my hands on: philosophy and so on and so forth. By this time, I was already fascinated with physics. But all of that was just my own doing--

Crawford: That's remarkable.

Sheinfeld: I remember I was still a teenager when I read about Albert Einstein, and by this time, Einstein was already one of the people that I looked up to the most. It became even more pronounced later, when I got to know what he had done. But at that time, I remember his saying that the universe was boundless but finite. In other words, like our planet. It's boundless, but it's finite. Even at that time, I remember thinking to myself, "But if that's the case, then what's beyond? Then something has to be beyond. But how can it just be?" Already at that time, I began questioning things and began thinking about the universe. So from then on, that was one of my great fascinations.

Crawford: Was that comforting to you?

Sheinfeld: I was fascinated by it. I became more and more fascinated by the idea of the universe. And yes, I think I can say yes. I can answer yes. I would read what many of the great physicists were saying--for instance, by now, of course, this is much later--I was now married, and I remember my wife in a sense teasing me about it, but there was a British physicist by the name of Sir James Jeans, and another one that I also read was Arthur Eddington, another British physicist.

But Sir James Jeans remarked about the number of stars--I remember his saying that the universe was so incredible that it was more incredible than we could possibly even imagine, and I remember his saying that there were more stars in the skies than there were grains of sand on all the beaches of our planet earth. And I remember when I mentioned that to my wife, she

said, "Oh, I don't believe it." Of course, she was just teasing me, I know.

But anyway, I remember that and remember, as I say, James Jeans saying that the universe was not only beyond our imagination but it was beyond anything that we could even possibly imagine. At this time I was already becoming much more sophisticated about physics, and I already had an idea of what Einstein had done and how he had changed our thinking about the universe and time and space, you see. After all, that is what his special theory of relativity, which came out in 1905, one year before I was born, was about.

Crawford: Did you relate these theories to music?

Sheinfeld: I'm coming to that. Now, at that time, I did not relate that to music.

Studying with Alexander Sebald: 1922-1929

Crawford: You might talk about your musical life. You were out of school, you were thirteen years old. Did you go to a conservatory?

Sheinfeld: I wanted to mention this now. Now, when I was out of school, I was still studying with this man. I think his first name was Alexander. Alexander Zhukovsky. I studied with him until I was sixteen, and I had private lessons with him. I went to his home for my lessons.

But when I was sixteen, I switched over to this man who was Hungarian, Alexander Sebald. He had an absolutely masterful technique. I began working with him, and I worked with him maybe only one year, when my father felt that he could no longer afford lessons, really, he couldn't afford them, and he went to see my teacher, Sebald.

By now, Sebald obviously had a high opinion of me and liked me a lot because when my father told him that he could no longer afford to pay for lessons, Sebald said that he would give me lessons without charge, and he used to give me two lessons a week, every week. And I studied with him until I left for Italy in 1929.

Sebald lived all alone. By now, I was becoming really an advanced violinist, and he used to tell me that he didn't think

that I would be a virtuoso, but he felt that I would play well enough to be a concertmaster of a major orchestra. And he would invite me every once in a while to his flat. He had a flat on the South Side, somewhere, in Chicago. I think of it as rather a large-sized apartment. And he had practically all of the scores of Wagner and Brahms. Those were his favorites. And he would invite me. He would tell me to bring my violin along. And he would cook a goulash.

Crawford: He was Hungarian.

Sheinfeld: Hungarian. And while that was cooking, he and I would play duets together, and he would talk to me about his early life. He had been a traveling virtuoso in central Europe: in Hungary and elsewhere, and he would have two programs that he would play all alone. He even showed me posters that he had still saved. He had two programs. One of them, he would play all of the six sonatas and partitas for unaccompanied violin of Bach. Would you like more tea?

Crawford: Wonderful tea, thank you. So he would play Bach?

Sheinfeld: He would play all of the Bach--there are three partitas and three sonatas, and he would play those on two successive evenings. These are the unaccompanied sonatas. And his other program consisted of all of the twenty-four Caprices of [Niccolo] Paganini.

So he was obviously a very brilliant, very brilliant virtuoso. And I think his teacher had been a man who--I knew that name; you wouldn't anymore, I guess--but his name was Cesar Thompson. He had been a brilliant virtuoso and technician in his day. And I think that my teacher, Sebald, studied with him. Anyway, Sebald really did have a fabulous technique, so he would tell me about these teachers, and we would spend time talking together. And he really liked me a lot.

Crawford: You must have been his star pupil.

Sheinfeld: I guess I was.

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Sheinfeld: On one occasion, he told me that he had at one time been married but then got a divorce, and he had not remarried since, and that was it. I really don't know this for sure, but in later years it has occurred to me that he may have been a homosexual. I do not know that. Certainly, he never touched

me in any way like that. I mean, we played duets together, and he would talk to me about things; he was obviously a lonely man because he enjoyed having me and playing these duets, and then we would have dinner and he would talk to me, as I say, about his experiences.

Later, when I had myself begun to compose, which I came to rather late, actually, he used to sit with me--he, himself, wrote a lot of songs, and they all sounded like Brahms. I still remember that, and I already knew it at the time. He would sing those in a kind of croaking voice, but he would sing for me and sit at the piano and play his songs. I think that he was sort of a loner, and he may have been a loner because in those days one couldn't say one was a homosexual. One had to keep it sort of to oneself.

So that was it. But it has only been in recent years that I have thought about it, because people sometimes have tried to hide the fact that they're homosexuals.

But I, in turn, I loved him after he gave me these lessons free, and I loved him in spite of the fact that he--I guess that's the way people were brought up in Hungary--would make a little nasty crack once in a while about my being Jewish or something like that.

Crawford: He was not Jewish.

Sheinfeld: Oh, no. He was a Hungarian. No, he was not Jewish. But in spite of that, I was his favorite pupil.

Crawford: You were the best one.

Sheinfeld: You see? And all of that. When I think about that, I also think that this was just something that was inbred into people where he came from, from his background. He was really not anti-Semitic. That's the way it was. Because actually he didn't have to teach me. He could have refused to give me any free lessons; he could have decided not to invite me to his house, which he did on numerous occasions.

In one sense, I repaid him in a very small way, but I did repay him once, and it was a difficult moment in my life. He was going to give a recital, after all these years--I was now already about twenty or twenty-one or whatever, maybe even twenty-two--but anyway, he had a studio in what was called Kimball Hall and probably to this day is called Kimball Hall. It consisted almost entirely of music studios, which private teachers had.

He was going to give a recital for the first time, and in this recital he was going to play all the twenty-four *Caprices* of Paganini. He also was going to play as an encore the *Perpetual Motion* of Paganini but not the way Paganini did--he was going to play it in octaves. Sebald was one of the earlier practitioners--which I think he learned from Cesar Thompson--of playing octaves, not just with the first and fourth, but first and third and second and fourth, so you could actually finger octaves. And he was going to play the entire *Perpetual Motion*--*Moto Perpetuo* of Paganini in fingered octaves.

Now, he had all kinds of students--he was obviously a well-known man because I remember that there was someone who had come up from Texas to study with him.

Crawford: Did he play with the Chicago Symphony?

Sheinfeld: No, no. He was a private teacher, and he made his living as a teacher.

I got out of the elevator, and I started walking along the hall to his studio, and I heard him playing this *Perpetual Motion* in fingered octaves, and it was out of tune. It's easy to play fingered octaves out of tune. Anyway, it was out of tune. And I had a terrible crisis. On the one hand, I loved him and I did not want him to humiliate himself by playing. But on the other hand, I was also very fearful that if I said anything to him, he might just throw me out and that would be the end of it and I'd have no more lessons.

Fortunately, my honesty prevailed, and I came into the studio. We all called him "Professor," and I said, "Professor, I was coming along in the hall and I heard you playing," and I said--and I almost started crying--I said that it was out of tune. I said to him, "I don't want you to play that." Just like that. I almost broke into tears. Well, he didn't say a word. He gave me my lesson, and that was all.

But at the concert, when he played the twenty-four *Caprices*, he did not play *Moto Perpetuo*.

Crawford: And the *Caprices* were all right?

Sheinfeld: The *Caprices* he could still play. Oh, yes, he could still play.

Crawford: What a wonderful story. Where did he give this recital?

Sheinfeld: I think that he gave it, actually--you know, I'm not certain about this, but I think he gave it at Orchestra Hall, where the Chicago Symphony still plays. I think he gave it there, but that doesn't sound right to me. Where? I can't remember. But my memory is that he gave it at Orchestra Hall. There were two places that one played recitals in those days.

Going to Concerts and Forming a String Quartet

Sheinfeld: Fritz Kreisler used to come along, and he was my father's and my absolute favorite, and we never missed a concert. He would come twice a year, and he would not play in Orchestra Hall. He would play in what was called the Auditorium, which is where the operas were given. And Kreisler would fill up the Auditorium, and there would be seats right on the stage, right in back of him. It was all sold out, you know, I remember that.

Crawford: Did you go to concerts with your parents?

Sheinfeld: With my father. My father would go with me.

Crawford: Your mother didn't go.

Sheinfeld: Well, sometimes she went, yes, but most of the time I remember going with my father. At times, just by myself. I can only remember those two concert halls, so I don't know where Sebald played. I just know that he played, that he played well, that he obviously played not as well as he played when he was really young, but he played well.

But he did not play the Paganini *Moto Perpetuo* that time, and he never said anything to me about it, but I do know that obviously he realized that I told him the truth. Nobody else had said anything to him--not the pupil who was from Texas, who was at that time more advanced than I, older than I--nearly all of the students that I ever encountered studying with Sebald were all older than I, but nobody else had said anything; I was the one. And he obviously remembered that.

I know that when I had my last lesson with him and was going to work with Respighi--when we said goodbye, he just kissed me and wished me well, and that was that.

Crawford: You were with him how many years, with Sebald?

Sheinfeld: From the time that I was sixteen until the time that I was twenty-three. And for most of these years, for at least five of those seven years, maybe six, he gave me two lessons a week absolutely without any charge. And I learned a lot from him, a great deal.

I must also tell you of another important thing in those early days. Now, I was obviously a very talented violinist, and I came to know other very talented students. One of them was, like myself, a pupil of Sebald, and he was about eight years older than I, and he was like Sebald, Hungarian, Catholic Hungarian, and we became very close friends.

We decided to form a string quartet. Joe Kovacs was his name. He played second violin, and we brought in a young fellow--I cannot tell you, maybe Joe knew him--but we brought in a young fellow by the name of Isador Zverov, who was about three years younger than myself, who played viola. And our cellist was actually an amateur cellist--when I say "amateur," that was not going to be his profession. But he came from a well-to-do family, and he played the cello.

We organized this string quartet, and we were all good players. And we just loved it. And we would get together twice a week--I was the first violinist. And we would get together and play, and play for hours, and in the hot, hot summer days in Chicago, which can be hot, hot, we would sit bare-chested, and we would be perspiring and we'd pass a towel around [laughing] but we would continue.

Crawford: What did you like to play?

Sheinfeld: We played everything. We played all of the quartets of Haydn, at a time when the edition was and probably still is called *Thirty Famous Quartets of Haydn*. Now, actually, Haydn wrote some eighty-five. If you include *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, which he originally wrote for string quartet, it would amount to about eighty-five string quartets. We played them all!

And Joe was the main one, and he was working. He had a job also. As I say, he was eight years older than I. He was the one who had the bat and ball, actually. You know that saying about you let a kid play because he's got the bat and ball. But Joe actually could play well, and he supplied all of these quartets.

Crawford: How could he afford that?

Sheinfeld: He had a job. He could afford to get the music, so he bought the music--and we played everything. We played all of the quartets of Haydn. We played the quartets of Mozart. Not the earlier ones, but the really great ones. There were about ten of them, which are absolutely fabulous. We played the Mozart quintets. We were getting to be known, and people would come and play with us. A clarinetist would come and play the Mozart quintet and the Brahms quintet with us. And a pianist would play the Schumann quintet and the Brahms quintet. And in those days, we played Cesar Franck's quintet, which was played a lot.

We just played everything. We played the quartets of Beethoven, even the last string quartets, which practically no one was playing in those days. People sort of had a tendency, for some stupid reason, to think that they were not good because, you see, he was already deaf when he wrote them. But we played them all.

Crawford: Did you play publicly?

Sheinfeld: We even on a few occasions played publicly, and we got to be quite known and did very well. Also, in the last year that I was in Chicago, we played about once a month on a radio station. We would play a program.

Crawford: What did you call yourselves?

Sheinfeld: We had no name.

Crawford: The no-name quartet. [laughter]

Sheinfeld: The no-name quartet. There is to this day in Chicago a place called Cook County Hospital, and the interns there and nurses got to know about us, and we were asked if we would play for them. And so on hot summer days, we would play about once every two weeks. We would give a concert on the roof of Cook County Hospital, and we would play string quartets for these interns and nurses and so on. After I had left for Italy, my teacher took over the quartet. He became the first violinist.

Crawford: Your teacher? You mean Mr. Sebald?

Sheinfeld: Sebald. He took over the quartet. On a few occasions, we had invited him, of course, and he would come and hear us play. But when I left, he actually took over the quartet, and they played for a couple of years, as I discovered afterwards--they would give a series of about three or four concerts a year during the two years, and when I came back they were still playing together, and they invited me, and I played--in this

case, we played some quintets. I guess maybe the Mozart quintets. I don't remember. But I remember that I played second viola for them, so that was a great, a marvelous learning experience for all of us.

Oh, yes. I must tell you this: that we would meet at my house on a Sunday night maybe once every two or three weeks. And by now I had a whole collection of very good friends, these friends with whom I'd go to the Indiana Sand Dunes and so on. And they all loved music, and they'd be invited to our house, and we would play. Afterwards, my mother would put on a big spread.

Crawford: She enjoyed this?

Sheinfeld: She loved it, although by now my parents would usually already have gone to bed. But they did not mind. We would sit around, we young people, until all hours of the morning, just talking and talking about music or various things.

Crawford: What did your mother prepare for you?

Sheinfeld: I can't remember. I know that there was always plenty of food.

Crawford: Did you play Bartok and Schoenberg?

Sheinfeld: In those days, I didn't even know Bartok and Schoenberg. I knew the name Schoenberg, and I'll tell you how I knew it. I mentioned very briefly before a person with whom I became very good friends. He was the one who introduced the woman who became my wife and me to each other. I was a very welcome visitor in their home. I originally became very good friends with his sister, an outstanding pianist, and we were both the same age, I think.

Her name was Isabel, and we as young people would play around here and there, and I guess we got to know each other because I began to go to her house and we would play violin and piano sonatas together.

Her mother, who was a very lovely person, practically adopted me. I was regarded as almost a son in the house. And her brother, Hal, who is the one who became my very close friend, was about four years younger than Isabel. Then there was another younger brother. He still comes to San Francisco every year. His name was Rafael, and he later became a geologist.

Crawford: What was the last name?

Sheinfeld: Yalkovsky, Y-a-l-k-o-v-s-k-y. And Isabel--she had from her high school days a boyfriend, and they obviously loved each other, and that lasted, and they got married, and when they got married, my string quartet played for their wedding.

Isabel moved to New York with her husband, and she became a pupil of Olga Samaroff, who was a well-known pianist in those days, the first wife of Leopold Stokowski. Olga Samaroff, as I say, was Isabel's teacher. And Isabel played in some kind of a competition and won, and the prize was to play with a number of the symphony orchestras. I think she played with the Philadelphia Orchestra, with the Chicago--she played with a number of them--but anyway, she wasn't quite brilliant enough. She was very good, but she wasn't quite brilliant enough to really make a career as a pianist.

But she was a very ambitious woman, a very nice, very good, decent person, very ambitious, and she took up singing. It seemed that she had a good voice, and for a while there she was hoping to make a go of that. Again, that didn't work out. What I am now talking about is already later.

A B.A. from the American Conservatory; A High School Diploma from the University of Illinois Academy for Adults: 1929

Crawford: Yes. You're already back from Rome. What did you do in the years before going to Rome?

Sheinfeld: I was twenty-three when I went to Rome to study with Respighi, so I think I was about twenty-two at this particular time. Respighi came to Chicago, and he by now was a world-famous composer, and he was conducting the symphony in a program entirely of his works. I was a very shy person, and I had only started composing just a few pieces--maybe when I was nineteen or twenty.. I came to actual composing quite late.

Crawford: You had studied counterpoint.

Sheinfeld: I didn't even know about that until I was about thirteen or fourteen, when I was studying with Zhukovsky. There was a considerably older person who was considered at that time Zhukovsky's best pupil, and I remember he was the one who talked to my father, and he said that I was a very talented person, but I really ought to have lessons in harmony and things like that, and so my father found somebody who taught me

harmony. Not very well, by the way. I'm sure by the book. You know, kept one lesson ahead of me or whatever.

Crawford: A private music teacher.

Sheinfeld: Yes. But then I began to study at the American Conservatory in Chicago, which was also in Kimball Hall. My teacher was a man by the name of Arthur Olaf Andersen. He was at that time a pretty well-known man, and he also liked me a lot. I studied advanced harmony and counterpoint and orchestration with him. In fact, Andersen wrote a book on orchestration which was at one time very well used. It was through Andersen that I got my bachelor's degree at the American Conservatory in 1929. It was called the American Conservatory of Music. He was the lead teacher there, and he really liked me a lot.

Crawford: Even though you hadn't had your high school diploma.

Sheinfeld: Yes. I was so busy with my music, practicing and then learning harmony, and reading all the time. After all, I was a very well-read person. I was in some respects maybe better educated than a lot of people that actually do go to high school.

Crawford: Oh, I'm sure of it.

Sheinfeld: Or even later to college. The one thing that I never really had enough of was mathematics, which I really should have had.

Crawford: Hard to do on your own.

Sheinfeld: Yes. But when I was already back from Italy, I realized that it was a disadvantage to me not to have had a high school or a college education, and I went to a place called the Academy for Adults, where they had teachers who took you through these various courses--algebra and also other college courses. And every few months, there would be an examination run by the University of Illinois, who ran the program. I would go to these teachers and prepare, and then I would take these exams and I passed all of them. So legally, I had my high school.

Crawford: After you had your B.A. from the Conservatory?

Sheinfeld: After I had come back from studying with Respighi. I actually got it the year that I was ready to go to study with Respighi, which was in '29.

Crawford: Were you living at home all these years, when you were playing with the quartet and so on?

Sheinfeld: I lived at home until I went to Italy.

Quartet Repertoire and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra:
Introduction to Schoenberg and Stravinsky

Crawford: When did you start the quartet?

Sheinfeld: It was 1926, or around then. We were together about three years, until I left for Italy.

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Sheinfeld: When I left, they gave a wristwatch to me, and the quartet also gave me (which I still have to this day), in one volume all of the quartets of Beethoven. That was the present that they gave me when I left for Italy.

Crawford: Did you have a favorite of the later quartets?

Sheinfeld: You know, I love them all. Sure, there were favorites. I remember that in those days it wasn't the later quartets. We used to play the C Minor, opus 18, number 4, a great deal, and we played the three Razumovsky quartets, opus 59, a great deal, and we played the opus 74, the *Harp* quartet; those were the ones that we played most. Those quartets we just played among ourselves, actually. We were learning them.

Haydn. We played everything. We played Schubert. We played so much, but the one fabulous work of Schubert, which is one of the greatest works ever written on this planet, is his great C Major Quintet--

Crawford: "Death and the Maiden"?

Sheinfeld: The slow movement of that quintet uses "Death and the Maiden." The second violin and viola are playing part of the "Death and the Maiden" at the opening of the slow movement, and the first violinist is just sort of playing a heartbreaking obligato. That may be the single most beautiful slow movement in all of music. But that we never played. I came to play that much later on in life. But we did play his quartets, his string quartets. And we played the Dvořák--

Crawford: I was going to ask you about Dvořák.

Sheinfeld: We played Dvorák, especially the E-flat Major and the F Minor, the one that's known as the *American*. But we also played some other Dvorák. And we played all three of the Schumann quartets, which for some reason no one plays now, but we liked them. We played everything.

Crawford: You played everything.

Sheinfeld: We played the Debussy string quartet and the Ravel string quartet. Now, remember, this all happened up to 1929--it could have been no later than '29, and it happened earlier, when those were new works, when hardly anybody was playing them. We played them. We just played everything.

Crawford: Were women playing string instruments? Did you ever have women play in your quartets or quintets?

Sheinfeld: We had women who would play--pianists who would play the Schumann quintet and the Brahms quintet and the Cesar Franck.

And when we played the Mozart quintets--in fact, I don't even remember who played the extra viola. It was somebody that one of our players knew who joined us. We never had one special person who played. But we just played all of these fabulous works. As I said, we even played what were in those days considered modern works.

But Schoenberg. You asked me about Schoenberg. I came to know Schoenberg in Hal's house. These people were Music Lovers, with every word capitalized [laughter]. And the phonograph went on all day long in their house. Hal collected everything, and it was in his house that I heard the first Schoenberg that I ever heard, and that was *Pierrot Lunaire*, and that was something really to hear. I still remember the impression it made on me because I have a very open mind, but I had not until that time heard atonal music, and that is, of course, the big thing--

I can remember I listened so intently to that that I got a headache. But it made a big impression on me. That was the only work of Schoenberg that I had come to know, except for a performance now and then by the Chicago Symphony of his *Transfigured Night*.

Crawford: Very romantic.

Sheinfeld: Yes, that's as far as it went. I actually came to know Schoenberg much later on in life. I also got to know Stravinsky because the Chicago Symphony played his work.

Crawford: Who was conducting then?

Sheinfeld: Frederic Stock. He did *Le Sacre [du Printemps]*. And I remember that when they gave the first performance, and I attended it, they had in the back a screen and the screen would show which part of the work it was, and so on. Stock wanted that--it was considered a very difficult work. I remember that in one sense I took to that piece right away--I realized that this was something very special. But I hadn't heard Bartok. If I knew Bartok, it was only a name. I hadn't heard one single work of Bartok's.

Crawford: Did you go to hear Stock conduct often?

Sheinfeld: The very first time that I went to hear the Chicago Symphony, I think that I was about sixteen. I had started studying with Sebald, and there was a man who was an amateur--he was a physician, but he took lessons, and he had season tickets to the Chicago Symphony, and on one occasion he took me to a concert. And on this concert they played--I still remember it because it was a memorable occasion for me--they did Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony, and Jascha Heifetz did the Elgar Violin Concerto. And that was my first real symphony concert, and I found that fascinating.

I remember I must have relayed that to my parents because thereafter, from the time when I was about seventeen or certainly not later than eighteen, they got season tickets for me, and I went to the concerts every Saturday night for those years, until I was ready to go to Italy. I had by this time, among those friends that I told you, two with whom I became very, very close friends. One of them became a physician who worked later at the Meninger Clinic, and the other was an untalented painter, but anyway, he was interested in painting. And we were very close friends. On Saturday nights we would go to the Chicago Symphony concert.

I don't know if you have any idea of how freezing cold Chicago can be in the winter, but it is dreadful. I can still remember getting off the elevated train and having to walk two blocks to get to Michigan Boulevard--or one block--to get to Michigan Boulevard, where the Orchestra Hall is, and the wind would be so ferocious that there were times I would be stopped dead in my tracks. I was not actually knocked over, but it was just that dreadful.

Well, we would walk home after the concert, and I want you to understand that we all lived pretty much on the far west side of Chicago, and it was about forty or forty-five blocks,

and pretty good-sized blocks from Orchestra Hall to where we all lived.

Crawford: Miles! What was your neighborhood like?

Sheinfeld: There were two boulevards which intersected each other. One was called Douglas Boulevard, and the other was called Independence Boulevard. It was only about eight blocks from what became Cicero, Illinois, which was the hangout of Al Capone, you know. So we were on the far west side.

Crawford: Would you say blue-collar neighborhoods?

Sheinfeld: Well, we obviously did not have enough money to live in another neighborhood--but it was okay. I mean, my mother kept a clean house.

Crawford: What was the house like?

Sheinfeld: We lived in apartments. We lived in flats, you see. My father never had his own business in Chicago, and we lived in flats. That was it. But whatever neighborhood we were in, our house was clean.

But all I want to say is that in that freezing cold, we three would walk home because we were so full of the music that we had heard. And we just talked and talked, and before we knew it, we were home. And it took us undoubtedly a couple of hours. It would have had to take us a couple of hours. But that didn't stop us young people from doing that.

Studying Orchestral Scores: A Remarkable Talent for "Hearing"

Sheinfeld: Now, Respighi was a world-famous composer. He came to Chicago, and I don't know whether it was in the very first months of 1929 or in the last months of 1928, but he was going to conduct the Chicago Symphony in a concert entirely of his own works. This was about as far advanced as I was at that time in what one would call twentieth-century music. I appreciated Stravinsky--but the real thing that Stravinsky had done, I really didn't yet fully understand. And except for having heard *Pierrot Lunaire*, Schoenberg was almost an unknown quantity. I mean, the real Schoenberg.

So in any case, I wanted to study. I thought that I would like to work with Respighi, although I was a very shy

person and had just really come into composing and had written my first work--it was a suite, I think in four movements, for orchestra.

I must say that right from the beginning, I had a natural aptitude for the orchestra. I learned also a lot by going to those concerts of the Chicago Symphony. Wherever possible, I would go to the music section of the Chicago Public Library, the downtown library, and I would check out scores that they were going to do at the concert.

And I would look them over and mark up certain places that were questionable to me, and my season ticket was up in the cheapest seats, on what we called the gallery, but on the gallery the lights were not turned off, and I could sit there and follow with the score. And when I would come to a place where I had put little question marks, I would hear what really happened.

Crawford: You could conceptualize it from the score?

Sheinfeld: Oh, of course I could! I had a special talent, which I didn't realize was a special talent, from childhood on. I was able to look at a piece of music and know what it sounded like. And when I was on my way to my violin lessons and my teacher would live a considerable distance away I would either take a streetcar or the elevated train (we called it the "el" in Chicago), and would, when I had a seat on that streetcar, take out the piano part, which had of course the violin part of the piece, and I would just read it, and I would hear it and I would know what it sounded like.

So I was able to hear music, and I just thought that everybody could do it. I didn't realize that that was a special talent. So I could read a score, but I would often have a question like, for instance, there is going to be a solo here for the flute, and all of these other instruments are playing. How well will that flute be heard? Or the oboe? Or what will the effect be?

I had a natural feeling for the orchestra, but I had to know about balances. We call those balances, you know. And so I learned a great deal by doing that and by seeing what would really work and how it would sound and so on and so forth. But my questions were about what the music--not the actual instruments--but what the actual music, itself, would sound like.

Crawford: I understand.

Sheinfeld: I knew that. I could read that. I always did that. It was later, much later in life, that I began to realize that this was a special talent. But I grew up being able to hear.

Now, this is much later, but when Seiji Ozawa was the conductor of the San Francisco Symphony in the 1960s, his assistant was Niklaus Wyss. The symphony inaugurated a special kind of summer event which went on for about four or five years, and in the summertime, we would have a six-week summer session in which we would commission a composer to write something. I think it didn't start out, but it ended up at Lowell High School, with the orchestra there.

And at the very last concert of the six weeks, the composer that we had commissioned would have written a work which could be played by both a number of the regular symphony players plus the advanced players from the high school orchestra.

During the six weeks, the young people were exposed to contemporary music, really contemporary twentieth-century music, and so on. And Niklaus Wyss was put in charge of this, and he selected three of us to be judges to find a person to commission. I was one of the three, and there were two others, all of whom were very much with contemporary music. One was Charles Shere, and the other was Howard Hersh, who for a while did the program notes for the Chicago Symphony. We were the three judges.

And when we came for the very first meeting to Wyss' house, he gave each one of us a whole set of scores which we looked at and which we were going to take home. But in any case, we were given a whole set of scores and we had to sort of decide which of those were the best.

Now I, as I mentioned to you before, I was already a very good friend of his. When he gave me my bundle of scores, I would turn pages and I would immediately put something on one pile, and then I would turn other pages and then put them in another pile. And Niklaus asked me to stay after the other two had left. And he said to me--you know, he saw the scores that I had selected, and he said, "David," he said, "I'm very surprised." He said, "In a few minutes, you decided about certain scores that you just felt should be rejected and other scores that should be looked at." He said, "I was playing these scores at the piano for about a week and arrived at the same conclusion"--

Crawford: Oh, that's remarkable.

Sheinfeld: And he was absolutely amazed at that. Now, I had another student, who was my student for many years--in fact, we went to his high school graduation in later years. He came from a very wealthy family, the Rosecrans family. He was in a sense the one musical person in that family.

Crawford: And he could do that same thing?

Sheinfeld: No, but he was determined to be an opera conductor. He knew things too right from the score--by the way, would you like some more tea?

Crawford: Oh, I would, yes.

[tape interruption]

Sheinfeld: In any case, he became the director of the Houston Opera, and he brought me some new scores. They were actually the kind of thing that I would regard as really nineteenth-century music with wrong notes, the kind of thing that some composers write and think they're writing new music.

But he brought me a couple of operas, and we were upstairs at my desk, and he said, "David, when it comes to reading a score, you're a genius." So I realized that that was unusual, and that is what I wanted to tell you. But now I better get back to Respighi--

Crawford: Let me just ask you one question before you go on to Respighi. The ability to withdraw scores from the Chicago library. Was that remarkable for the time?

Sheinfeld: No. This was the main library downtown. Actually, my wife and I lived in Pittsburgh for one year because I played viola with Fritz Reiner. I will come to that. But in Pittsburgh they had a phenomenal music library because it was endowed by Carnegie, and the music librarian told me that any new music that came out was just sent to them. And furthermore, the librarians were so delighted at my interest, they told me I could take out as many scores as I wanted to and keep them as long as I wanted to.

Crawford: Isn't that marvelous! What an education.

Sheinfeld: Just so I returned them. But this is already later. New York has, of course, a great library, but you can hardly ever get to it because there's so much demand for the scores, so you may have to wait ages before you can get a certain score you like. But in Chicago I was able to get everything--first of all, the

general repertoire, which was what generally was performed by the Chicago Symphony. And so I was able to check out these scores, and it was a very good thing. It helped me.

A Job Offer from the Chicago Opera Company

Sheinfeld: But in any case, now I wanted to work with Respighi. In those days especially, I was a very shy person, but I plucked up enough courage and I took this score of mine, which was the first work that I had ever written for a big orchestra.

I discovered that the Respighis were staying at a hotel that they called and I think is still called the Congress Hotel, which was just a couple of blocks away from Orchestra Hall. I was able to find out where they stayed, and I called up, and it was Signora Respighi who spoke because Maestro Respighi didn't speak English. She said yes, I could come. So I came, and I called upstairs, and she came down to see me. I said I was hoping that the maestro would be willing to look at the score, and she took it and told me to come back in a few days, which I did.

And again she came down, and she brought the score to me. And she asked me why I had wanted to show it to Respighi, and I said that I was hoping that he would accept me as a pupil. And she said, "The maestro accepts you."

Crawford: Just like that.

Sheinfeld: And then I discovered that there were only six of us he accepted for his master class for composers. So that was how it happened. I left early in October for Rome, and I stayed there for two years. It was shortly after I left that there was the big Depression.

But I have to tell you of something--I think you would be interested in this. I was a very good violinist, and there was a competition which was open to any kind of player: violinists, cellists, pianists, whatever. One person was going to be selected, and that person would be soloist with the Chicago Symphony. My teacher encouraged me to try out for that, so I played--I think I played the first movement of the Beethoven Violin Concerto with the cadenzas and everything.

One of the judges was a man by the name of Giorgio Polacco, who was the music director of the Chicago Opera

Company. He was the husband of a woman who was a famous singer in those days, more famous as an actress, actually, but an opera singer. Her name was Mary Garden.

Crawford: Oh, yes.

Sheinfeld: You knew that. Well, I played, and there were some other performers, and there was a young woman who played the piano, and she was the one who got the prize. She won the competition, and she appeared with the Chicago Symphony.

But a few days after this I got a call from the personnel manager of the Chicago Opera. He asked me to come down and see him. And he told me that I had made quite an impression on Maestro Polacco, and there was going to be an opening for assistant concertmaster of the Chicago Opera, and he offered me the position. I told him that I couldn't accept his offer, because I was going to Rome as a scholarship student of Respighi's and would probably be there for a couple of years. Perhaps because he was Italian, he was impressed. He told me, "When you come back, this job will still be open for you."

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Crawford: That's marvelous!

Sheinfeld: When I returned, of course, the Depression had occurred, and the man who was the big contributor to the opera, a man by the name of Samuel Insull, had obviously lost everything and he committed suicide by jumping out of a window, and that was the end of the Chicago Opera. When I came back, there was no Chicago Opera. So I had a very, very hard time getting started. They didn't need me because there were hundreds of professional musicians who had lost their jobs, and they were people with experience and known. So I really had a very hard time.

II A MASTER CLASS IN COMPOSING IN ROME: 1929-1931

Learning Italian and Forming a Close Friendship with Violinist
Mario Corti

Crawford: We will get back to that, but can you tell me your first impressions of Ottorino Respighi?

Sheinfeld: I came to Italy, and I took a quick course in Italian at a summer session of the University of Chicago. I was able to attend that, and I could read in Italian. I really couldn't speak very well, but I could read. Because Respighi didn't speak English, I knew that I would have to learn to speak Italian pretty quickly.

Crawford: Had you met with him before you left?

Sheinfeld: No. I met with Signora Respighi.

Crawford: I think she was a composer, too?

Sheinfeld: She was a pupil of his. She had been a pupil of his, yes. And actually I remember her as a very nice, as a charming woman.

Crawford: How old were they at that time?

Sheinfeld: Well, Respighi was in his early fifties. She must have been in her forties. In any case, I came to Italy, and I started immediately--I would get the morning paper and read, and any word that I didn't understand I would underline and then afterward I would look it up in the dictionary, and I really learned the language quite fast. I really couldn't speak it well, but I was getting better and better. But I could understand. I could hear the language and understand.

It was getting better and better for me. And after a couple of months, I can't explain it but it seems to me I woke

up one day and all of a sudden I was able to understand everything people were saying, and I was able to speak myself. It was all accumulating in my mind.

And fortunately, with one exception, all the people that I knew in Italy were Italians. The one exception was an Italian-American--I had come to Italy, to Rome, with a letter of introduction to Mario Corti, who was one of the leading violinists in Italy. He also was the head teacher at the Academia Santa Cecilia in Rome where Respighi taught.

I came, as I say, with a letter of introduction to him. And the Cortis spoke English very well because Mario Corti, for about three years, had taught violin at the David Mannes School of Music in New York, and so both of them spoke English very well. I came to meet Corti, and I played for him, and he asked me what I wanted to do, and I said I thought that while I was here I would study with him. And he said to me, "You play too well for me to teach you, but I will be very glad to coach you once in a while if you come."

So I would go there once every three weeks or once a month or whatever, and Corti introduced me to a lot of contemporary violin music. And the Cortis took to me. Signora Corti mothered me--they didn't have any children of their own.

I lived about three blocks away, and it was Corti who introduced me to this Italian-American pupil of his, who was from Youngstown, Ohio. So this Italian-American took me around, and we found a room that was rented out in an apartment house in a place which in those days was a relatively new quarter called I Prati, which means "the plains."

As it turned out, I discovered after only about a week that I lived only five minutes' walk from St. Peter's. I had arranged with a trattoria to take my meals (they called it a *pensione*), and I got lunch and dinner there. And after dinner I would sort of walk around.

It was a dark night, and I was walking on a street, and I began to hear the sound of water. I made a left turn, and eventually I came out upon a very broad square, and it took me a couple of minutes but then suddenly I realized this was St. Peter's Square. I used to go and see the marvelous Michelangelo paintings in the Sistine Chapel. In those days, there weren't all these huge crowds around. I mean, one could actually go and see things.

Impressions of Rome

Crawford: Did Rome look poor to you?

Sheinfeld: Rome was--some of it looked poor, but no, I didn't feel that way about it. Rome is a special city. First of all, there's ancient Rome, the Roman Forum, the Coliseum. Then there is the Campidoglio, the capitol, which was done by Michelangelo and so on. That's permanent. That's there. And then there was the more Medieval and Renaissance Rome, which is there, unchanged to this day. I used to walk around all of these places, and I couldn't think of them as poor because they were what they were: history.

The place that I lived in those days was, I would say, middle class. The *Trastevere*, which means "across the Tiber," was where the poorer Romans--the original ones, the ones that really considered themselves Romans--lived. That's the poorer section, but there are poor neighborhoods right in Rome on this side of the Tiber.

In Rome you can be in a poor neighborhood and right there is a palazzo, a palace. You are in what was and still is considered the ghetto in Rome. There was the Cenci Palace there--you probably know the story of Beatrice Cenci, who was raped, I think, by her own father and then murdered him and she was eventually executed--that was right there. Where the French Embassy is now, the Farnese is close by--if you turn your back on the Farnese Palace and you start walking right down the first street, that's the ghetto. And yet that's where the great Farnese family lived at that time. So you can't describe it as poor.

The Cortis lived only three blocks away from where I lived, but suddenly, two blocks away, the neighborhood suddenly picked up beautifully. They lived in a more expensive, obviously much more expensive place than I did, although I was fine.

Crawford: Did you have a room?

Sheinfeld: I had a room in a house which was in a flat which was rented by people who could obviously afford to have it. But they still needed to have people, so they rented out rooms. I remember only a few years ago my wife and I were in Rome, and we were at St. Peter's, and I said to her that I would show her the house where I had lived. And we arrived there, and it had really become totally, totally shabby, and the neighborhood had really

changed a great deal, which happens--it was after almost fifty years after I had been in Rome.

I took my wife up to Villa Borghese, which at one time of course was owned by the Borghese family, but which is now the main park in Rome. There is a place called the Pincio, which is sort of on a hill, and when you arrived at the very end of the Pincio, you looked out over an open space, and you saw in the distance St. Peter's.

I told my wife that I was going to show her that. And I took her up on the Pincio, where two great cedar trees had had the audacity to grow up in the fifty years that I was not there and totally obscure the view. [laughter]

And right below the Pincio is a famous square, which is called the Piazza del Popolo, the people's square. And from the Piazza del Popolo there are three avenues opening up. One is the main avenue, the Corso, which runs from there to Piazza Venezia, where the Palazzo Venezia was--Mussolini had his offices there. From there, you're very close to the Campidoglio, the city hall, let's say, of Rome, built by Michelangelo. And you're very close to the Roman Forum and so on and so forth. So that's one of the avenues.

Another avenue, the Via Sestina, I used to travel on to get to the concert hall where the symphony played its concerts. In those days it was called the Augusteo because the Emperor Augustus had been buried there, and they had built a big round theater. It's no longer there; the concerts are now given in a very good concert hall, and the orchestra is no longer called the Augusteo. It's called Santa Cecilia Orchestra.

Crawford: You studied at the Santa Cecilia Academy?

Sheinfeld: I studied in the Academy. That's for the advanced. There's also the conservatory, which is a few blocks away.

Remembering Respighi

Crawford: What were your first impressions of Respighi?

Sheinfeld: We had four two-hour sessions every week. There were only six of us. Not necessarily all six of us were present at every class, but anyway, six was what Respighi expected. And we were expected to have worked as much as possible. It was

understood, of course, that we couldn't all have worked for every one of the four sessions.

Respighi did not consider this a course in which he was teaching us how to compose because it was a master class for composers. It was understood that we were able to compose, but he would criticize what we did. By now, by the way, I had learned well enough to speak so I could understand what he said.

Respighi would have the students sit down at the piano and play--we had two women in our class one year, the first year.

Crawford: Do you remember names?

Sheinfeld: One of them I do remember. Her name was Editta Parpaloglio. I remember that name. I remember that I was invited to her house once to play sonatas with her. You know, this was a totally different experience for me. I suddenly realized what it was. But there we were, playing sonatas, and her mother sat in the same room and was sewing.

After a while, I suddenly realized we were being chaperoned. And I thought to myself, well, that's the way it is in Italy. I don't know if it still is, but it was at that time. I mean, things have changed enormously.

Crawford: But she may have assumed that you were courting her daughter.

Sheinfeld: But you know, it also occurred to me, what could we possibly have done--I was playing the violin and she was playing the piano. What else could we possibly have been doing? And her mother could have heard it from any room. But she sat right there in that room, sewing. Once Editta and I were going to go to some concert together, and her sister came along with us. You see, by now I already understood this and so on.
[laughter]

What I remember about the other woman is that she was from the Soviet Union. She was a Russian woman, but she had come to study with Respighi. I remember one year there was a Sicilian young man who came. He had to speak Italian because Respighi could not understand Sicilian. That's how different the two were--

Crawford: How did Respighi communicate with all of you?

Sheinfeld: In Italian. And we had to speak Italian. The second year I spoke Italian very fluently because, as I said to you, the Cortis took to me and I was even mothered by Signora Corti. They took me along with them in the summertime, when it gets ferociously hot in Rome, they took me up to the Dolomite mountains with them, which had been ceded from Austria to Italy at that time, after the First World War. In fact, we stayed in the same house--they had a whole house, and I had one room in a far corner of that house, totally separated from them but it was the same house.

We used to go mountain climbing together and so on. But we worked too--on our trip up to the Dolomites, the Cortis said to me, "David, no more English. From now on, you're going to speak Italian. And if you absolutely cannot say what you want to say in Italian, tell us what you want to say in English and we'll tell you how to say it." So when I returned to Rome for my second year, I spoke Italian well.

Crawford: You were there all summer up in the Dolomites?

Sheinfeld: We were there for about three months or maybe longer. Before that I was already learning to speak Italian because I became very good friends during my first year with a man who later became a world-famous organist. His name was Fernando Germani. When Grace Cathedral--what is it now? twenty, twenty-five years, maybe thirty years ago--put in a new organ, they brought Fernando from Italy to inaugurate the organ.

I don't know if he's still alive now, but he was approximately my age, and as I say, he became a world-famous organist. At that time he was still a student when I lived in Italy, and somehow we got to know each other, and we became very good friends. He even invited me to his house once or twice. He had a small organ there, and he would play on it for me. We would go to the opera--he was able to get tickets often for opera, and he would call on me and we would go to the opera together.

Fernando could speak English, but I spoke Italian with him. All my friends, with the one exception of this one Italian-American, all my friends, all my acquaintance, were Italians. This was deliberate--I wanted to get to know Italy, and I wanted to get to know the language. In fact, I was getting compliments from people, and when I returned from the Dolomites, I spoke Italian really very well. It just came right off my tongue--there was no question about that. I could communicate with Respighi even the first year.

Crawford: Did you have a close relationship with the Respighis? Did you go to their home and so on?

Sheinfeld: No. I was at the Respighi home twice.

Crawford: What was that like?

Sheinfeld: Once was at the end of the first year, when I was writing a piece. It was based on the "Walpurgisnacht" from Goethe's *Faust*. You know, the witches' night. Since I hadn't finished it, Respighi told me that he'd be happy to see me when I finished it, to call him and I could come to his house. So I did.

Crawford: What was the house like?

Sheinfeld: They obviously had money, and it was very nice. But not long after that, they moved to even a more elaborate house, which was at that time on the outskirts of Rome. By now, it's right in Rome. But it was almost on the outskirts of Rome, and it was up on a hill, and I remember that to be a very nice house. That was shortly before we were nearly through with our two-year course, and the whole class, all of us, were invited there. So those were the only two occasions.

But I was with the Cortis quite often. They would take me with them to certain parties. They knew that I was Jewish, and for some reason--they didn't realize that I was very secular and all of that. But they thought I would be more comfortable if I got to meet some Jewish people, so they introduced me to a composer who was a friend of theirs, and at that time a quite well-known composer by the name of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. He was Jewish, and they introduced me to him.

And Signora Corti--I have no recollection of why--but she took me with her once to some kind of an Italian cocktail party. There were a lot of people there, and a lot of people just standing around. Wine was served, and there was some food. She said, "David, do you see that woman over there? Well, she's Jewish. She's married to a non-Jewish lawyer, but she's--" [laughter] They really wanted me to feel at home.

I came, as I say, from a very secular family--of course, I knew that I was Jewish and don't misunderstand me, but my parents had kind of an international outlook about human beings, and I did too. But what made me really know I was Jewish was that this was now the beginning of the Hitler era.

And when I read about these things going on, I decided the hell with that. I was a Jew, and that was that.

Rome, Anti-Semitism, and the Popes

Crawford: Was there any anti-Jewish feeling in Rome at the time?

Sheinfeld: Of course, of course. There was plenty. But in Rome at that time, generally speaking, Jews were not mistreated. The secretary of the Fascist Party, Mussolini's Fascist Party, somebody told me, was Jewish. Mussolini was not, himself, anti-Jewish. He became anti-Jewish when he formed his alliance with Germany. All of a sudden, Jews were not acceptable. But otherwise, no.

Rome has had a peculiar history in that respect. At times, Jews were very well treated. It depended on who was the Pope. Jews were very well treated, and at other times they were not.

Crawford: How dependent on the Pope?

Sheinfeld: It depended on the Pope because when a new Pope would come, Jews or their emissaries would go to see the Pope and if he accepted their offering, it meant everything was okay. But for instance, the one who became Paul IV, he was very anti-Semitic, and when he became Pope and the Jews approached him, he threw on the ground what they brought.

Crawford: That was a material offering?

Sheinfeld: Whatever, yes. And so they knew they were going to be mistreated. So there was that kind of history. It goes back several hundred years. Then later, when Cardinal Roncalli became Pope John XXIII, he was, of course, very brilliant and very ecumenical--he was the one who started the Catholic Church on its way toward ecumenism, you know. And he as a person had such a wonderful sense of humor. But those things have happened all along.

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Sheinfeld: The Medici family, for example, were not racially biased at all. It may have been Giovanni Medici who, when he became the Pope, he took on the name of Leo X, Pope Leo X. He was a great music lover, and the Medici family wanted to find a teacher for

him. You know, music in those days was a requisite part of the education of everybody--and they wanted to find a music teacher for Giovanni.

So they wrote a letter to someone, and they asked about the great Josquin de Pres [Flemish composer, born ca. 1440]. Josquin is considered, looked upon, as the greatest composer before Bach. In his day, people looked upon him with the same kind of reverence that we give to Mozart. In fact, he had a name--they called him the Prince of Music.

So the Medici family inquired about Josquin and asked this friend of theirs if he would recommend Josquin as a teacher for Giovanni. And the man wrote back and said, Josquin is indeed a great composer, but he has these peculiar ideas that composing is a special talent and that just because you learned counterpoint you're not necessarily going to be a composer.

So instead, he recommended Heinrich Isaac. Heinrich Isaac was no slouch, by the way. He was a great composer also. So Heinrich Isaac was recommended to be Giovanni's teacher, and Giovanni studied music with Isaac, and when Giovanni became the Pope, as I say, he took on the name of Pope Leo X, and he had absolutely no prejudices against Jews whatsoever.

There was a great lute virtuoso who was Jewish, and Leo X admired him very much and made him the mayor of one of the towns--and the citizens were outraged, you know, that a Jew should be their mayor.

Crawford: Who was the Pope when you were there?

Sheinfeld: I guess it was Pius? I was not very much interested in things like that, as I've told you. My friends were Catholics because they were Italians. But I would say that with maybe one or two exceptions, they were pretty secular. It was amazing how secular Romans could be and how almost anticlerical. They would even have jokes, you know, that they would use among themselves about the Pope and so on. But they were Catholics, and that was it. I'm not aware that I met any Protestant Christians in Rome, at least that I knew of as such.

As far as I know, the Cortis were quite secular. I'm not aware of their going to church. They may have done so, and the same with the Respighis. Fernando Germani was, I think, a more Catholic person, a more religious person.

Germani came to America several times, and when I was living in Chicago, he came to Chicago and gave a recital at Mandel Hall, which was a part of the University of Chicago. He, of course, visited with me, and I went to his recital. And then, when he played all of the Bach organ works for Grace Cathedral in a series of, I think, six programs, we saw each other a number of times during that period. In fact, he even brought me regards from Signora Respighi, although he said that "she lives *la dolce vita* now." By that time, the movie had already come out.

Crawford: What did he mean by that?

Sheinfeld: The sweet life. That meant that she was really spending a lot of time just having a good time, just having a good time, just making oneself seen in places where one ought to be and expensive places and wearing expensive clothes and things like that. That's what *dolce vita* became, a kind of a slang expression.

Respighi and Toscanini and Fascism

Crawford: What were they like as a couple?

Sheinfeld: They seemed to get along very well. In fact, Respighi even mentioned during a class once about how one can suddenly get a writer's block. He said that had happened to him, and when it happened to him, his wife, he said, bawls me out. "She tells me I'm just a carpenter," you know, and all of that. He said it in a very happy way--obviously did not feel mistreated in any way.

Crawford: You said she was younger.

Sheinfeld: She seemed to be. Well, she had been a pupil of his. She certainly must have been--if he was in his fifties, she was in her early or late thirties or early forties.

Crawford: What kind of a personality did he have?

Sheinfeld: He? He seemed to be a very nice person. He was very friendly with the pupils. Remember, this was in the days of Mussolini, when in every piazza, every main square, there would be a poster or some sign hanging, "*Il duce*--" you can translate it two ways in Italian. "*Il duce ha sempre ragione*," which means that the *duce* always has a reason for what he's doing, but what

it really translates into is that the *duce* is always right. You can translate it both ways, but there's never any doubt about what is meant.

The Cortis would make little snide and disparaging comments about fascism and about the *duce* and so on, but Respighi never said one word, except on one occasion.

Respighi and Toscanini were very close--they had been friends since boyhood. They had maybe even gone to the same school. They certainly went to the same conservatory of music. So whenever Toscanini was in Rome, he always came to visit with Respighi. They always were together. They were such close friends that Respighi would even go with Toscanini off to Milan to hear him do a concert or whatever.

On one Monday, the first session of that particular week, Respighi came to the class, and he was all excited. He was smiling. He was very cheerful. He had been with Toscanini in Milan, and Toscanini was conducting a concert, and he had been asked--Toscanini had been asked to play the fascist hymn, "Giovinezza," which he absolutely refused to do. And he went on with his concert.

Afterwards a crowd, quote, "spontaneously," unquote, gathered below the window of Toscanini's hotel. And they knew exactly where to gather. They were shouting obscenities up to Toscanini, and Respighi said that he, himself, he was shaken up by it. He was sort of scared. But Toscanini walked right out on the balcony of his room, and he gave them obscenity for obscenity--Respighi said he used certain words that he had never heard. And the way Respighi smiled and was delighted, we knew how he felt about fascism, but he never said anything--that told us.

Crawford: Toscanini got away with it--

Sheinfeld: He got away with it because he was Toscanini. They didn't dare touch him.

Crawford: And he would never play in Germany until the war was over, isn't that right?

Toscanini "Saves" Fountains of Rome and Bolero

Sheinfeld: That's right. I have another story for you, and this comes right from Respighi. Once in class we were talking about the dependence of the composer on the performer, and how a really outstanding performance can make a composer, and a bad performance can break a composer, even. Just the way it can happen in a play, you know, it depends upon interpreters. Respighi told us this story himself, in around '29 or '30.

But the story that he told us went back to about 1916 or '17. He was already an accomplished and well-known composer in Italy, and he had written a piece which was the first work that he had written for a big orchestra.

The piece was performed in Rome by the orchestra there, and it was a total flop, just an absolute flop. Italian audiences are not in the least reticent about letting you know their feelings. You have to be in Italy to know this, but they let you know how they feel right there and then. And Respighi said he felt absolutely crushed. He was so discouraged, he locked that piece away in a desk drawer, and he decided to just forget about it and go on with his composing.

When he told us about this, we knew one thing right away --I certainly did, because I knew what the Augusteo Orchestra was; it was just a very ordinary orchestra. They could play the repertoire, don't doubt that for one minute. But there were really no exceptional players, with the exception of two people. They had an excellent principal oboe and an excellent principal bassoon at that time. The orchestra, by the way, today is much better.

But, in any case, in those days they were just poorly paid, and the good players would go into the opera orchestra, where they were paid much better. So it was easy to understand that he had just gotten a bad performance.

Shortly after this, Toscanini, who at that time was the conductor of the New York Philharmonic, came to Italy, and when he was in Rome he of course visited with his very good friend, Respighi. And he said to him, "Ottorino, do you have anything for orchestra that I could play? I would like to do something of yours." And Respighi said, "No, I don't have anything."

Now Toscanini already knew the story of the piece because the news in Italy--people know. If something happens in Naples, they know about it in Milan almost before it happens.

You know, Einstein said that nothing can exceed the speed of light. But in Italy, news travels faster than light. And so Toscanini knew all about it, but he didn't let on, he just said, "Come, come. You're always composing. You must have something."

So Respighi said, "Well, to tell you the truth, I have this piece that I wrote for orchestra. It was played by the orchestra here, and it was such a terrible fiasco that I'm ashamed to show it to you." Now, remember, Respighi, himself, told this story. And Toscanini said, "Let me see it." So Respighi said he unlocked his drawer and he took out the score, and Toscanini turned a few pages and he said, "I'd like to take this with me. I'll see you in a couple of days."

So he came back a couple of days later, and he said to Respighi, "I'll do this at La Scala." And he did it about a week later in Milan, at La Scala, and the piece made a tremendous hit. The same piece that had been totally a failure was all of a sudden a tremendous hit, and Respighi said that that made the international press, and it made him famous. The piece was *The Fountains of Rome*.

Crawford: No!

Sheinfeld: That's the story, and it came directly from Respighi. So Respighi was just pointing out how a poor performance can break a reputation. I remember I attended a concert of the Augusteo Orchestra--and they had a good conductor named Bernardino Molinari. He was a good man. But the orchestra, as I say, was quite ordinary. Also, the audience was unprepared.

They gave the first performance in Rome of Ravel's *Bolero*, and I was there. You know that that keeps on repeating, and what Ravel does purposely is to build a great, great orchestra crescendo, till the end.

But the Romans, after the piece was about a third of the way through and they kept hearing the same tune, they got very impatient and they started whistling, as Italian audiences do--as I said, they let you know how they feel. And they were singing the tune! [laughter]

Molinari played the piece through to the end, but then he walked off and refused to come back and take any bows or anything. He was just furious. And the piece was a flop there.

Two weeks later, Toscanini came to Rome with the New York Philharmonic. I attended both of their concerts, and they were wonderful. I still remember them. And on one of the concerts, they did Ravel's *Bolero*, and on this occasion it was a tremendous hit. First of all, I guess the people were already prepared. They knew. But there is a slight difference--and "slight," you can raise that up many degrees between the New York Philharmonic and what the orchestra in Rome was at that time. And also, of course, there was Toscanini. And they brought it off. So the same piece, I can also tell you, which had been ridiculed earlier by an audience was now cheered.

Respighi's Methodology and Music

Sheinfeld: Respighi's habit in the master class was to have the student sit down at the piano and play what he or she had done, and sometimes if it needed an additional pianist, Respighi himself would sit down and the two of them would play.

Crawford: He read the students' scores?

Sheinfeld: Yes. Since I was not a pianist, it was understood I couldn't play, so Respighi would always either himself sit down or sit down with a student and they would play what I wrote. Respighi would then make criticisms and comments, and the other students would all gather around. We were all invited to make our comments. And that's the way the classes went. So it was very good in that respect.

When it came to orchestration, the class was just totally outstanding because Respighi would look at a score and he would say to a student, "This is what you wanted to do, right?" And the student would say, "Yes." And Respighi said, "Well, it's not going to work. And it won't work because of this, because you've done this and you've done that and you've done that."

He was particularly excellent in that. He otherwise did not, as I have already said to you, attempt to teach us to compose. He was merely criticizing what we did because we were supposed to be, even if not very experienced, we were supposed to be composers, young composers, and we were supposed to be at least taken seriously as composers.

Crawford: Did he influence you as a composer?

Sheinfeld: No. Today I would say that what I do would not reflect his influence at all. I'm not underrating him in that respect. I admired him--I still admire him--I think he was one of the world's great orchestrators and remains so, one of the great orchestrators of the twentieth century. And he was what we would certainly call at least a minor master, but we'd have to call him minor, no question about that. *The Pines of Rome* is going to be around. That is a great piece, and it's simply going to be around.

Crawford: *The Pines* and *The Fountains of Rome* are the Respighi works we hear. Much of his music is not played often.

Sheinfeld: Well, he has chamber orchestra works which are very charming. In fact, I played them because one year, when I was in Rome, Respighi was asked to give a few concerts at the American Embassy, to conduct some of his work, and he organized a little chamber orchestra. Corti was the concertmaster, and Corti asked me to sit with him as the assistant concertmaster, and we had just a few violins. We had that principal oboe of the Augusteo, and we had the principal bassoon too.

Respighi wrote a very charming thing, something called *The Birds*, which consists of works written by a number of composers of either the Renaissance or post-Renaissance period, and which he orchestrated so that the score really sounds like birds. We played that.

Then there's one called *A Botticellian Triptych, Tritico Botticelliano*, too, about three famous Botticelli paintings. One of them is "Primavera" and the other one is "The Birth of Venus." And the third one, I forget what that is. It's not in the Uffizi Gallery. But anyway, those are charming works, and they're played to this day, these things.

Crawford: Respighi studied with Rimsky-Korsakov, did he?

Sheinfeld: He studied with Rimsky-Korsakov. And he also studied for a while in Germany with Max Bruch. Respighi was quite a linguist. He could speak German and he could speak Russian quite well, and I was told that, although he didn't speak English, he knew English and he read Shakespeare in English, but he just didn't feel comfortable enough to speak the language.

But he was a master orchestrator, and those works of his, and some of his songs, are still viable. They're still around and can be performed, and they're absolutely charming. And I played those works with him at the American Embassy.

Crawford: When he came to the United States in the late twenties and thirties, were you still in touch?

Sheinfeld: I don't think that he came to Chicago after I had returned from Italy. In fact, one of the main reasons that I came back (although it's just as well that I came back), but one of the main reasons I came back is that the next year there wasn't going to be any Respighi class. He was all booked up for a tour of South America, and he was going to be touring with orchestras in his own works. And so there was no point in my staying.

Crawford: But you would have stayed another year?

Decision to Return from Rome

Sheinfeld: I might have stayed. In fact, I could have--and this may have been a mistake on my part, but ultimately it wasn't, because I really should have come home and tried to get work in the Depression.

I had a chance to get the Prix de Rome. There was a man by the name of Felix Lamond, who was the head of the American Academy in Rome. We got to know each other. I used to walk there from where I lived--just in back of St. Peter's there was a kind of hill that one took, and it led right up to the top of the Janiculum Hill, which is where the American Academy is. And I got to know this man.

We played sonatas together, and he got to know some of my things. He liked me a great deal, and he told me that if I wanted to apply for the American Academy, he would recommend me and that recommendation was what counted very much for the Prix de Rome.

But if I had gotten it, I would have had to stay in Europe for three years, for three more years. I would be paid and I would travel, and it would have been a good thing. But I felt that I really could not do it at the time. And so I didn't even apply for it.

Crawford: Because of finances?

Sheinfeld: Because of finances, yes. My father was helping me, and I was also earning money--I got paid for playing those concerts but, of course, not very much. But it would have been all right. I

would have been paid. In fact, it probably was a mistake on my part not to have done it. But I was already in my second year in Rome, and if I had stayed another three years, it would have made five years, and I felt that I really ought to be home, and so I turned it down.

Right now, I can't be sure whether I did the right thing or the wrong thing, but anyway, I'm not even absolutely certain that I would have gotten it. But he assured me that his recommendation would mean a lot. So that was it. I remember that, and I don't regret that ultimately. Things worked out.

III BEGINNINGS OF A CAREER IN MUSIC

[Interview 2: April 4, 1998] ##

Music in Concert and on the Radio in the U.S.: 1930s

Crawford: We've been talking about your time in Italy, and I wanted to ask what work you used as an application for the Respighi master class.

Sheinfeld: I think I mentioned that I came to composing sort of late. I didn't start to compose until I was about nineteen or twenty. I had expressed myself creatively, but I used to write stories and poetry and so on. That I've done ever since I was a child because I sort of grew up in a literary atmosphere.

What I showed to Mrs. Respighi was the very first work for orchestra that I had ever done. I just had a natural feeling for the orchestra, and obviously in that very first work Respighi already saw that, because he accepted me.

At the time that I wrote it I didn't have Respighi in mind at all. At that time, my listening was limited really to what was being done in Chicago. And you know Chicago was not-- I think things have changed now, but it was not, for many years, one of the advanced posts of new musical thinking. For me that was a big moment when Frederick Stock gave the first performance in Chicago of *Le Sacre*. Somebody spoke before the performance. And it made a big impression on me.

One of my good qualities was that I had a receptive mind. I already told you that I heard *Pierrot Lunaire* on a recording of a dear friend of mine, and the tremendous impression that it made on me. I can't say that I understood it--well, I did understand--I knew that I was listening to something extraordinary.

In those days, people were not really playing Mahler much, you know. Yes, Frederick Stock did one or two performances, I must say. And I heard Mahler.

Crawford: Was that unusual programming for our country at the time?

Sheinfeld: Mahler was very unusual programming. And you know why it was even programmed? There were two societies: there was a Bruckner Society--Bruckner was not played much, either--there was a Bruckner Society and there was a Mahler Society. And the people of the Mahler Society used to write to conductors all over, you see. They were always getting hounded, in a sense. I used the word hounded in quotations, by the way. They felt "hounded."

Even Mahler wasn't played much, though Stock did some Mahler. Do you know how I really heard Mahler? In those days, when I was growing up, on a Sunday morning, you could turn on the radio. I don't want to shock you, but you see, television didn't yet exist.

Crawford: [laughter] The olden days.

Sheinfeld: But one could turn the radio on, on a Sunday morning and go all day, and hear one symphony concert after the other. The first concert came on from, was it called the Capital Theater in New York? There was some Hungarian conductor whose name I do not remember, and who did apparently, already at that time, like the works of Mahler. It was a movie orchestra, and they played on a Sunday. They would play an hour concert, and often they put a symphony by Mahler on--way ahead of everybody else.

After that concert was over, it was time to tune in the New York Philharmonic, and so I would hear the New York Philharmonic. After the New York Philharmonic was over, there was a Ford hour and there was, I think, a General Motors hour which went on; these were serious symphony concerts. And that was tremendous. It was a wonderful experience for me. And since my parents loved music, they didn't object to my listening to that all day long.

Crawford: Hours and hours.

Sheinfeld: All day long! But it was a great learning experience for me. One heard Leopold Stokowski, who was a very fine conductor--he was a showman. And there's no question he always made sure that people saw his best profile. He always managed to find an excuse to turn his profile to the audience. But never mind that, he really could conduct.

This is already after I had returned from Italy, in the 1930s, but Stokey [Stokowski] was still the conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra which was the orchestra at that time. It still is a great orchestra, but it was the orchestra then. He gave the first performance of works by Schoenberg, of works by Stravinsky.

The very first performance in the United States of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*--his neoclassic period--was given by Stokowski. The first performance of the *Five Pieces for Orchestra* by Schoenberg--now we're talking about real Schoenberg--were given by Stokey, by Stokowski.

Crawford: Was there more of a receptivity for new work then than there is now?

Sheinfeld: I cannot tell you how receptive people were. All I know is that they were done over the radio and one heard them. And Stokowski presented those on his symphony programs. There is one answer I can give you immediately and I'm very sorry to say it, but I think the present mood is one of kind of pampering the audience. Conductors choose the tamest possible twentieth century music.

Not only that but they do the kind of things that I--I think I've already mentioned this to you--that I call nineteenth-century music with wrong notes: you know--with dissonances or whatever. So in those days it was at least much more adventurous. As I said, Frederick Stock, who obviously thought of himself as having an open mind, doing Stravinsky at all!

Glière wrote a work--which in those days was a big thing, you know--called *Ilya Murometz*. It was about some Russian folk--whether mythological character or what--but it was a big symphony. And that symphony was full of augmented triads, which of course were the big thing in those days because that came out of Debussy. Debussy used the whole tone, the whole-tone mode. And the only chords that you get using whole-tone mode are augmented triads, one after the other. That's what it is.

When I say Debussy, I'm talking about a man who was a genius and who was a great thinker and so on. He didn't just use augmented triads--but it had a great influence. For instance, Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*: the big moment which represents the sorcerer [sings], those are augmented triads. And *Ilya Murometz* was full of that. So Frederick Stock did things like that.

I must also say, by the way, that I was aware that I wasn't really hearing a great work when I heard *Ilya Murometz*. I knew that it wasn't, but nevertheless there was one thing that I looked forward to: there was one tremendous climax which actually made orchestra hall vibrate. It practically shook the place, [laughter] and I found that very amusing to have that happen. So that's about as far as Chicago got.

Before I was in Italy I did not have that much opportunity to hear the really exciting music that was coming out of that second Viennese school: Schoenberg and Berg and Webern. In fact, I don't think I heard a single work by Berg at the time. And Webern, I don't think that was even a name that one knew at the time. So you can understand why I thought that Respighi was really the big thing. I'm not, by the way, knocking Respighi when I say that. As I've said, he remains what we would call a minor master. We make that distinction in poetry, you know. There are the really great poets, but there are other poets who have written poems--at least that particular poem or one or two poems that they wrote are interesting enough that they remain alive. And we call these people minor masters.

Thoughts about Respighi, Debussy, Ravel

Crawford: What would you say of Respighi's musical significance?

Sheinfeld: Well, at that time, as I say, I really thought he was the big thing. I still think that Respighi cannot be dismissed. *The Pines of Rome* is going to be around. I think that's his finest achievement. And that is absolutely going to be around, and can be played and will be played years from now. That is not just a masterfully achieved orchestral work, it's an outstanding work. Respighi was a great orchestrator. *The Fountains of Rome*, there are excellent things in it, but it's really very Wagnerian and so on, whereas *The Pines of Rome* is an original work and really has definite meaning. It forms a triptyc: *The Fountains of Rome*, *The Pines of Rome* and then *Roman Festivals*.

Crawford: Those were commissioned by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Did you know her?

Sheinfeld: I knew the name.

Crawford: She was a composer as well and she commissioned many works during that period.

Sheinfeld: Which were done, I think, for the Library of Congress? Yes. That third work, *Roman Festivals*, has some charming things in it, but it's really, I would say the weakest of the three works--*The Fountains of Rome*, *The Pines of Rome*, and *Roman Festivals*. Perhaps you have to have lived in Rome to get the real meaning of it.

There is a place in one of the movements of the *Roman Festivals* where you hear a mandolin solo and it comes as though it's across the Tiber [River], and it's a very charming moment. Otherwise it is really not an interesting work, musically. It is beautifully orchestrated, just beautifully orchestrated.

In the very busy days of Hollywood when studios were competing with each other and each studio had its own big orchestra, they had these arrangers who could really do all kinds of brilliant arranging and write these film scores and so on and so forth.

I have been told on more than one occasion, so I believe it, these people who did orchestration for the films, they would have open on a stand a score by Ravel, who was of course one of the absolute great masters of orchestration. They'd have--and they'd practically just copy over from there, you know, and get those sounds!

But I want to make that one distinction: there is such a thing as being an outstanding arranger and being able to write things for the orchestra that are going to sound well, and there is another thing which is to be truly a master of the orchestra, a master of orchestral thinking. Respighi was a master of orchestral thinking. Ravel was a master of orchestral thinking. Just to hear a Ravel score is to hear the orchestra sound as good as it can sound.

Ravel was often underrated. He was a much better composer, and he's now getting his recognition. But Debussy was altogether a genius. We can say of Debussy that that's where what we would call the modern era in music started!

The opening phrases of *The Afternoon of a Faun* already take you into another world. And of course I had the opportunity of playing it with the person who just gave the greatest performances of those works, and that was Monteux, who could do Debussy, who could do both Debussy and Ravel

masterfully. No one else could do it--Stokowski could approach it, but not quite like that, not that far.

Crawford: Let me ask you one more question about Italy, and that is you said that you played at the U.S. embassy with Respighi?

Sheinfeld: Yes, Respighi was asked by someone in the embassy--I don't know whether it was the wife of the ambassador, whoever--to give a series of concerts at the embassy. I think we gave about four concerts, and we did mostly Respighi's works. We did some other things, but you know Respighi wrote quite a number of very bright and good works for chamber orchestra.

The Birds, have you ever heard that? That's a very charming work based actually on works from the Renaissance and maybe post-Renaissance period, maybe going into the baroque period--and not maybe, actually--because Rameau was one of the people. Anyway, Respighi made a suite out of these, out of their works--it was a neoclassical thing that Stravinsky had originated, you know. The neoclassical was going back to classic composers for their forms and using them as models, and then turning them into twentieth century works; that's what Stravinsky did.

Stravinsky's Rhythmic Revolution

Sheinfeld: One of the things that Stravinsky did was create the absolute rhythmic revolution. *The Rite of Spring*, is practically a miracle. It's simply a great masterpiece, which he says was largely intuitive. Now, it wasn't that simple, because he had already done a great masterpiece and that was *Petruschka*.

And in *Petruschka*, Stravinsky has that wonderful moment in which he uses bitonality, which we had the tendency to call polytonality--that was one of the twentieth-century techniques: polytonality. That means being in more than one key at the same time. But it usually was really bitonality. It was really two different keys. And Stravinsky has that wonderful moment played by the two clarinets in *Petruschka* in which one clarinet is playing in C major and the other plays in F-sharp! And F-sharp is as far, as far--that's the point of no return. That is the tritone, and that is exactly as far as you can get. So the two clarinets are doing that. That already goes on in *Petruschka*. And then that great--that Russian dance which is done [singing]. It's done by piano, you know. A piano--that's already in bitonality. And so on.

So, *Le Sacre* wasn't really just coming out of thin air. It is true that Stravinsky puts E-flat, the key of E-flat and the key of E against each other often, and similar situations in *The Rite of Spring*.

Crawford: And those works were actually premiered by Monteux, weren't they?

Sheinfeld: Monteux was the one who gave the very first performance of *The Rite of Spring*, in Paris. And that was the one that resulted in that big riot, you know, and Monteux and Stravinsky had to leave through a window. [laughter]

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Sheinfeld: Some people who write about that event are not convinced that the riot just was because of the music but because of the choreography. I think they were shocked by some of the things that went on. I'm not sure about that, but I do know that it's true that Stravinsky, and I think Monteux also, left through the back through a window. They had to get out! And so there was really a terrible riot at that first performance.

But you know what is remarkable, now: that was a score in which there were very frequent changes of meter, and it was at a time when that didn't happen in music. At that time you know what was already considered a score that people talked about was that movement from Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony which is in five--[sings]. That was a big thing, you know--in five, my goodness! [laughs]

And I must say to you that I have played on numbers of occasions, and not so terribly long ago with conductors who could do that, because that's really not so tricky, but when it came to doing things like 5/8 or 7/8, they couldn't do it! And even a fine conductor technically, like Ormandy, could not do things like that.

Crawford: Why?

Sheinfeld: Because they were accustomed to playing things either in two or four, or three or 6/8, which generally was done in two anyway. And when you did that, that was it! That went on for the length of the piece. And all of a sudden here is somebody who came along and began to write music where in the last part it changes from bar to bar, and not only does it change from bar to bar but it doesn't even make a pattern--I mean you really have to know it. [sings]

I have pointed out to pupils of mine that as a non-pattern, it makes a kind of pattern when you really see that. But the point is it remains asymmetrical. Even in later life, Ormandy could not do it!

My violin concerto was done by the Philadelphia Orchestra in the early 1960s. Ormandy did not conduct that, it was done by his assistant conductor, and when I was there, my friend, who was the concertmaster--he was already ambitious about conducting--had done a performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* with the Philadelphia Orchestra at Robin Hood Dell, a place where they gave summer concerts.

They had only one rehearsal and my friend did Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* with that one rehearsal and Ormandy never forgave him for that. They had been very good friends and Ormandy loved my friend, whom some persons--Leonard Bernstein, for example--thought of as the greatest concertmaster anywhere. And when John Corigliano, who was his concertmaster at the time, was thinking of retiring, Bernstein and Corigliano both came to Philadelphia to talk to my friend and to try to get him to accept the position as concertmaster with the New York Philharmonic. They told him to name his own price, but he wouldn't come, he wouldn't leave.

Crawford: What was his name?

Remembering Enrique Jorda, Pierre Monteux, Fritz Reiner

Sheinfeld: Anshel Brusilow. [spells] And Anshel became a conductor himself. He had an orchestra for several years, a chamber symphony in Philadelphia and then he was the conductor of the Dallas Symphony for quite a number of years.

But at this time he was the concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra. And Ormandy was terribly upset at the fact that Anshel was able to do the *Rite of Spring* with just one rehearsal because although Ormandy did the *Rite of Spring*, violinists in the Philadelphia Orchestra told me that he did it by counts. He could not do it musically, he just knew, "I have to count this many bars here, and this many bars here." And he went along and the orchestra played.

Crawford: Was that true of [Enrique] Jorda?

Sheinfeld: I remember that very well. After all, I went through that whole period, I was in the orchestra. The interesting thing is that Jorda really in some respects was not as bad as people thought. I mean, he had talent.

Crawford: Very musical, wasn't he?

Sheinfeld: He was very musical and very sensitive. He did certain things that were very good, but he really was not technically equipped to be the conductor of a major orchestra. And in one sense, I don't really quite mean it that way, but I'll still put it that way: I never forgave him for that because I felt that he had the potentiality. But I think he just didn't work, I think he took things easily and that's what I never forgave him for.

He mixed a lot socially, which I suppose was a smart thing. Monteux didn't, but Jorda did. But Jorda was a highly intelligent person. I had numbers of conversations with him. He used to seek me out because he realized that I was a good musician, and so he picked up certain things from me.

You could talk with him about a lot of things. And he was no dummy. There were things that he could do, things that required color, like in one sense the Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*. Of course, the greatest performer of that was Monteux, but Stokowski also did that for a while.

Crawford: Monteux was probably not able to do as much French work as he would have liked to?

Sheinfeld: Ah, he did a lot of French works. The Cesar Franck symphony was performed. I think we did it almost every year or every other year, and of course he did that very well. And that was at a time when Cesar Franck was really being played. But he did things by Vincent D'Indy which could just as well have not been done, and so on. He did lots of French things, but Monteux was actually very well-trained in the German repertoire, and he did Beethoven magnificently.

Crawford: Was he a great technician?

Sheinfeld: Let me tell you something about being a technician. I think I mentioned to you that I had auditioned on a cheap viola and with a borrowed viola bow and I got the job to play with Fritz Reiner in Pittsburgh. Now, Fritz Reiner was a great conductor, no question about that. And he was known for his conducting technique, and with him that was a very self-conscious thing. [laughs] I can still remember--this I know I didn't tell you--we started the very first rehearsal of that coming season in

Pittsburgh and the very first thing that Reiner started with was the Second Suite from Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloë*. And right away, that starts out with the violas--[sings] and so on.

Although I was imported from New York and was paid quite a bit above the regular scale for that, I had to sit in the last stand of the violas, that was always the case when a new person was brought in. And I was watching for that downbeat--it's very soft--and all of a sudden, people started playing! I hadn't seen it, and so of course, I started playing, too. And at the orchestra intermission, I mentioned that and they laughed at me and said, "Oh, the same thing has happened to us." You have to know, when Reiner does a pianissimo or a pianississimo--three p's--he will do that." [gestures]

Crawford: A very, very small gesture.

Sheinfeld: Well, of course somebody sitting half a mile away doesn't see that. [laughs] But that was very self-conscious with him. And I became aware also of certain things that I would have regarded as flaws, although from a great man. He would insist that you had to play something at a certain part of the bow. This is as much bow as you used and you played it at the point. And God help you if you forgot. And if you used a bit more bow, you heard about it.

Crawford: I've heard he was a real temperament.

Sheinfeld: Oh, he was. He was impossible. I could understand it, but I didn't want to understand it. But he was--actually he was deliberately sadistic.

Crawford: How so?

Sheinfeld: Well, I can tell you a true story. In the 1940s we subscribed to The New Yorker magazine, which in those days was really great. Their music reviewer, whose name was Winthrop Sargent, was okay in the standard repertoire, but he had not the slightest, not the tiniest understanding of any twentieth-century music. He couldn't even understand Stravinsky, the brilliant rhythmic things that happened. And he gave Stravinsky some very bad write-ups.

Stravinsky referred to him as tin-eared, and that made him much more careful. Afterwards Winthrop Sargent was a lot more careful about references he made to Stravinsky because, after all, Stravinsky was a big name. You couldn't dismiss him the way you could, let's say, some young composer who might have dared to write two bars which were dissimilar in a row,

you know, in their metric construction. He could destroy such a young composer. But of course, he couldn't do that to Stravinsky--so Stravinsky, as I say, referred to him as tin-eared.

Winthrop Sargent had been a violinist, and there is a story that he met Fritz Reiner on the street one day in New York. And after all, Winthrop Sargent was known, and they stopped and talked. And Winthrop Sargent at one point said to Fritz Reiner, "By the way, Maestro, you know I at one time played in your orchestra." And Reiner's face fell. And he said, "Oh, so you don't like me." Now, that tells you something about him. [laughter]

And did I tell you, once we were on tour with the Pittsburgh Symphony, and so of course we were put in hotels. My roommate was the assistant concertmaster of the Pittsburgh Symphony and it was early-ish and we had plenty of time before the concert, so we were going out to dinner. As we left our room, we heard somebody yelling, and in order to get to the elevators as we came along our corridor, we had to make a turn. There was Reiner standing outside of what apparently was his room, yelling at the top of his voice at his wife, just bawling her out. We couldn't avoid it--we had to get to the elevators, we had to pass him, so we went on.

Reiner looked up and saw us, and he didn't even lose a syllable. After all, we were just his peons, you know? After all, people played in his orchestra. He didn't even lose a syllable, he turned his head again and went on bawling out his wife. So that was the kind of a man he was.

On the other hand, one could have an intelligent conversation with him. And surprisingly he really had a good ear for what was really happening in music. For instance, once during an orchestra break, I was actually talking with him and he was telling me about what he regarded as important scores. And he said to me that he regarded Berg's *Wozzeck* as the greatest score written in the last forty years. Well, he was not far wrong! That goes back to the season of '44-45. He understood these works. This was known--he knew music.

Crawford: How did he treat the musicians in general?

Sheinfeld: He used to make people play stand by stand and even individual by individual, and he would humiliate them and make all kinds of insulting statements. The result was that Reiner fired about one-third of his orchestra every season, and one-third of

his orchestra quit on him. I was one of those people, although I knew that I was going to be coming to San Francisco.

Opera in Italy and Chicago

Crawford: You said that opera players were paid better than orchestra players. That surprised me. Why is that the case?

Sheinfeld: Oh, that was in Italy. That was in the orchestra in Rome, which is now called the Santa Cecilia Orchestra, and is a very good orchestra. But in those days it really was not; it was okay, it was adequate, it could play the repertoire, but that's about it. And the reason was that they were very poorly, very poorly paid. So I was talking about the Italian orchestras at the time. And remember that in Italy, especially at the time when I was there--what music meant to them was opera, that was their music. Concert composers like Respighi were in a sense almost a kind of new thing in Italy at the time. I mean, you were an opera composer, that was what music meant to the Italians.

It was a wonderful experience for me to attend an opera in Italy. In Rome they not only had the regular opera, but there was at least one other kind of opera company which also was active. And I remember going to a performance of *The Barber of Seville* at this more provincial opera company and it was a lovely experience. You see, after all those people know those operas and they know every word, and they would just break out laughing now and then. And so--which in fact they should have! If you know the libretto, it is very funny.

Crawford: I like subtitles for that reason, because people are understanding a little bit more.

Sheinfeld: Well, in those days, we didn't have subtitles. I often got a lot of experience hearing opera in Chicago when I was growing up because I used to go--I was one of quite a number of, shall I say, late teenagers who would go to the stage door. And the man who was in charge of the cloakroom assumed that we would check people's coats and hats and so on and so forth.

He would come to the door, and he would select numbers of us who would work in the cloakroom. And we would check coats and then the man would say to us, "Now you can go," and we would rush in and we would hear the opera, all the rest of the opera. And that's how I got to know, to hear many operas. The

man came to know me, and he would select me practically every time. And I got to hear all the Wagner operas, and all the Italian operas that the Chicago Opera Company did. And that was the way I did it.

But when *The Barber of Seville* was given, there were moments which are so obvious that even American audiences laugh: like that moment when the music teacher, all of a sudden stands there frozen. He is caught by surprise, they are telling him that he is sick, that he has to leave because they don't want the Doctor Bartolo to find out--you know--what was really going on between Rosina and the Count. So, there he stands. And they do that wonderful little thing that they're singing to him [sings] and so on and so forth. And they talk about the fact that he's frozen like a statue--*come una statua*--and so on. Well, even American audiences can get that. But there are many other moments which are very amusing. And I was struck by that, that the Italian audience know every word of those operas, and so they react in a much more live way than American audiences do to these operas.

That is still the way it is in Italy, today--but when I was there, every single opera was done in Italian, whether it was by Ricardo Wagner [in an Italian accent--laughter], or whatever, or Debussy, the *Pelleas and Melisande*--

As I told you, I became very good friends with Fernando Germani--I think I mentioned that name to you last time. Fernando every once in a while would get tickets to the opera. He'd get a couple of tickets and he'd come and call for me and we'd go to the opera, so I got to hear lots of operas in Italy. And since that was what the Italians went for, the best players, the best instrumentalists went into the opera orchestras. And they got paid well--

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Sheinfeld: There was a composer well known in Italy at the time--his name was Ildebrando Pizzetti. At that time, he was considered on a par with Respighi. I used to play, I think, a sonata of his that he wrote for violin and piano that Corti had made me acquainted with.

Fernando once came to call for me. He had tickets and we went to hear the world premiere of an opera by Pizzetti--Pizzetti was also writing concert music, and that was a relatively new thing. They were sort of lesser people to the Italians. The important composers were the ones who wrote for the opera.

Crawford: And so the nineteenth-century German composers weren't heard all that much in Italy at the time? Brahms and Beethoven?

Sheinfeld: Oh, they were played in symphony concerts.

Crawford: Was the music as popular as opera?

Sheinfeld: Oh, yes! Oh, those concerts were very well attended. But in Italian concert life, it was the opera that counted. Oh, Beethoven was played all of the time. And Giuseppe Haydn was played, Wolfgang Amadeo Mozart [laughter] was played. You see? And because--and they were actually--I'm not exaggerating. They used those names. Brahms, Beethoven was--I think, the "Ludovico" van Beethoven. Brahms, I'm trying to think: was it really "Giovanni?" I think it was Giovanni Brahms. Giovanni, yes. But I'm not sure. And Wagner was Ricardo Wagner.

Wagner really upset the whole musical apple cart. He influenced people in all kinds of ways, even negatively. Even people who didn't like Wagner were deliberately not allowing themselves to be influenced by Wagner, you see? But Wagner was in their minds. Debussy actually referred to Wagner, very correctly--you see, Wagner at that time was considered to be writing a brand new kind of music, and Debussy didn't agree with that. He said Wagner was a "splendid sunset." And he was absolutely correct.

Debussy understood and appreciated Wagner's music, but he also understood--and he was absolutely right--that this was not a beginning, it was an end. And I think you couldn't possibly put it any better than that: he said Wagner was a "splendid sunset," which is the real description.

Crawford: I know that the houses are very different in Italy, and I remember Pavarotti said he didn't like to sing in Parma, the people were too tough.

Sheinfeld: Oh! Well, Parma was the toughest of all. Parma and Milan. The audiences at La Scala are simply ferocious.

Resettling in Chicago during the Depression; Arranging for NBC;
Composing for a WPA Theater Project

Crawford: We should talk now about when you came home in 1931. Back up a little bit and talk about what you found. Your contract with

the Chicago Opera was out of business because of the Depression--

Sheinfeld: That was gone. I had a very tough time getting started. When I came back, I really thought--after all I had studied with Respighi, you know, and I thought--and when I came back I discovered that they weren't waiting for me! [laughter]

There were hundreds of musicians out of work, now. People who had played at the Chicago Theater, which was the big movie house in Chicago, and which had practically a whole symphony orchestra, the way Radio City Music Hall and what I think was called the Capital Theater in New York had--all of these musicians were now thrown out. These were all professional players; they were all out of work!

Radio still had orchestras, but they had smaller orchestras and they had dropped numbers of those players, so I just wasn't able to get anything, and I was very discouraged and had a tough time. This went on for quite a while, and then through some recommendation, I got to do some programs at NBC Radio. Two of them--I still remember--were sponsored by Johnson's Wax, two radio programs which we gave. I did some arranging for that, and played in the orchestra, and helped prepare that program, so I was pretty well paid. That was my initial job.

I cannot remember, Caroline, how I got to know this man, but there was a composer who lived in Chicago, and he was very wealthy--his name was John Alden Carpenter [1876-1951]. He was a composer and wasn't just one of these composers who was played because he was able to contribute money to the Chicago Symphony; his music was sometimes played elsewhere, also. And he got to be a well-known name.

He knew about me having been with Respighi and I was invited by him a couple of times to his house. Having come from a poor family, that was really an extraordinary mansion, you know, that I saw. And it was on one of these occasions--they were now getting the WPA projects underway--John Alden Carpenter told me that there was a theater project getting started and they would need a composer and he would be happy to recommend me if I would accept that.

As I said, I was an arranger for a few programs on NBC radio, and we used to repeat--in those days, they had to repeat those programs. We would play the program and then we'd just hang around there for half an hour, and then we would do a

repeat broadcast which went to the Pacific Coast, so actually those programs were well paid.

So I was working there, and in order for me to get on as being what they call the chief composer of the WPA theater project, I had to be given a supervisory capacity so they could employ me, even though I was not out of work, you see? So that is how I got the title of chief composer, but I must also say to you--and please keep this a secret from anyone but 500,000 people. You see, 500,000 people may know about this, but I was not only the chief composer, but the only composer. [laughter] I was given that title.

Crawford: Was that challenging for you? Did you like it?

Sheinfeld: Originally I did not like it. I felt discouraged because I had hoped to be able to compose seriously, and so on, and so forth. I came to realize that it was actually a great learning experience for me, because I had to turn things out quickly and they had to be good, and right away I heard the orchestra do what I was doing. And they loved me there. I was very popular with the people on the WPA project, and I did all kinds of things.

The first thing I did was to just orchestrate a musical by a man who had been George Gershwin's secretary. He was not an untalented man, but he couldn't write down his own things, so he used to sit down at the piano and play and I would take it down. I had a perfect ear and would take everything down and then I would orchestrate it. And that was very successful.

Crawford: This was a musical for the theater?

Sheinfeld: It was a musical called--Now! I think there had been a successful musical called *No, No, Nanette*. And this thing was called, *Yes, Yes, Yvette!* [laughter] A very original title. Two men had written the lyrics and the story for the musical--and I was in contact with them and I took down everything just from the piano.

Crawford: How many measures can you hear and take down? How fast can you go?

Sheinfeld: Well, I would go as fast as I could and then I would ask him to stop. I'd write down what he had written and then he would go on. And if I needed to have something repeated, he did that, of course. But I took down the whole thing, orchestrated the whole thing.

Writing Music for Dance Companies and Some Shakespeare Plays

Sheinfeld: It was a big success. And then there was a company that actually became a well-known dance company named after Ruth Page, and it was a very tricky thing that I had to do, because she already had entirely choreographed her program before I started. A pianist would just sit and play just the right kind of beats, and when I came and they showed me what the choreography was and everything, and starting from there, I wrote an entire ballet score. That's not easy to do! To do it that way, you see--instead of writing the music first--and I had to fit the music in--but I did it, and that turned out to be a big success. Ruth Page also did twentieth-century new things, which had obviously been influenced by Martha Graham.

Then there was Kurt and Grace Graf, who were influenced by Graham too--and I remember going to their house and talking over the choreography. They had a Dalmatian dog, a very big dog, and for some reason that dog took a liking to me, so I would sit on the couch and this Dalmatian dog who weighed about 587 pounds, slightly less, would come and jump on my lap and stay there, you know? [laughter]

They also had all of their choreography laid out and I had to write the music for that. Then I did three Shakespeare plays. I'm not sure that I perfectly remember the name of the chief actor. Was it E.M. Keith? I am not sure that that's correct.

Crawford: How much music did you write for plays?

Sheinfeld: I wrote an awful lot! As I say, now, I did the music for three Shakespeare productions. I remember the name only of *As You Like It*. Yes, it was *As You Like It*, that I remember. I don't remember now what the other two were, but there were three of them. And again, those were successful.

Crawford: Incidental music?

Sheinfeld: The music that Shakespeare required. You know, in Shakespeare there are definite moments when music is required. I also wrote an overture that was done before the curtain went up. You know, things like that.

And then there was a Yiddish acting company, and I was asked to write the music for that. And I remember that, again, was very successful. I was absolutely free, I just worked at home and did whatever. When I came to that first rehearsal

when they'd already played the music, the director said, "Oh, Dave, that's absolutely beautiful." I mean they just loved that music.

This director later became connected with the big advertising firm in New York: Batten, Barthe, Durstein and Osborne, BBDO, you know. But in any case, I began to realize at that time that it was a great learning experience because I heard everything that I did, I heard that it worked, that I had a good ear, and that what I did was all right--

And also, I wrote two different ballet programs for Ruth Page that I remember, and one for the Grafs, and what I was able to do was to write the kind of music that I wanted to write. So at that point, I was much more reconciled to being a part of the WPA project.

What happened was that less than a year after I came on to the WPA project those radio shows that I was working on were dropped. And all of a sudden I wouldn't have had any work at all. They were totally dropped. I remember we auditioned a man and a woman for a show called "Fibber McGee and Molly." [laughter] It was our orchestra that played and I made a great prediction: I said they would never last.

Crawford: You didn't have a good ear for comedy!

Sheinfeld: [laughter] I just thought it wouldn't last. Well, what didn't last was our orchestra. We had a too big orchestra. They were taken on, of course, and we played for them just one season and then we lost that, and that was the last radio show that I had. The WPA was my only source of income for a while.

Crawford: Did it pay you a living wage?

Sheinfeld: It paid a living wage because as supervisor I was able to be paid above the regular amount. It was not a munificent wage. But remember, one could live cheaply in those days.

Crawford: You were where at this point? You were back in Chicago?

Sheinfeld: Oh, this was back in Chicago. This was at a time when there were lots of restaurants around then, good ones, where you could get, believe it or not, a good meal. If you spent a dollar, that was a good meal. And my wife, we had by now married, knew a lot of restaurants where you could really get a good meal. The New Yorker used to run little squibs which they called the "Good Old Days" and there would be a restaurant

advertising a sirloin steak for thirty-five cents, you know. So, sure, I could get along on that, you see.

Crawford: Your wife was working as well?

Sheinfeld: My wife was working with a man who was the head of the economics department at the University of Chicago. She was his confidential secretary. And he obviously thought a great deal of her because when we were either going to get married or maybe we were already married, he threw a big party for us.

Crawford: What year were you married?

Sheinfeld: We were married in April of '42. I had my job at the WPA, and as I say, I had lost that job on the radio because Johnson's Wax and other commercial enterprises which had sponsored the program dropped our programs, that was all. You worked on a program for a few years and then your sponsor moved on.

Then the WPA theater closed down, also. And I then for a while played in the orchestra which was also sponsored by WPA. It was a symphony orchestra, and quite good. We used to play a lot of twentieth-century music. But yes, it was a difficult time for me because I really had expected more of myself, and I really wasn't happy about playing with the WPA or whatever, but there wasn't anything else.

Working for the U.S. Government during Wartime

Sheinfeld: When the war came, I had an opportunity to be the chief arranger for the Navy Band at Navy Pier. There was a pier in Chicago that used to be called Municipal Pier. It extended out into Lake Michigan, and my family, my mother and father, would sometimes go on a Sunday and take along a lunch or something. Well anyway, it changed its name to Navy Pier and there was a man who had one of those big dance bands. I think his name was Orrin Tucker.

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Sheinfeld: He was the head of music at Navy Pier. And what was nice about that was that those of us who lived in Chicago could go home at six o'clock. It was like a regular job. Now, I'm jumping ahead of myself.

I started to tell you there was a saxophonist by the name of Cecil Leeson. In those days, he was quite well known. He was a concert saxophonist, he did not play in dance bands or pop music, and somehow he got to hear of me and he contacted me and he asked me to make an orchestration. There seems to have been a concerto for saxophone written by Glazunov, but apparently, at least according to Cecil Leeson, there was no orchestra score. Glazunov had either not gotten around to orchestrating it or they had no orchestration.

So he asked me to do the orchestration, which I did. He played in a number of good symphony orchestras, and he loved that orchestration that I made. And then he became attached during the war to Orrin Tucker's Navy Band at the pier, and so he recommended me. And Orrin Tucker would have been very happy to have me join the navy, but I was not able to pass that test, it turned out. I am not color blind, but there are certain colors that I couldn't distinguish between, so I wasn't able to pass the navy's exam.

Then I was called up by the army, but I had an ulcer, and when the army doctors examined me, they rejected me. Nobody seemed to want me. I was given a 4-F status, so there I was back at home again, a civilian.

I did, however, take a job south of Chicago. I used to take the Illinois Central Train and travel maybe forty-five minutes or so to some place south of Chicago where I was an inspector for ammunition containers and canisters for the government, you see. That was my job, and I was on that for about eighteen months, I think.

That job was a twenty-four-hour job--there was a regular shift from eight until four, and from four until midnight, and from midnight until eight in the morning. And we had to follow that around. I think every couple of weeks it changed, but I had no problems, I could always stay on the day job because there were young women who were a part of our particular office force who were very happy either to take the four to twelve shift, or even the midnight shift--we called that the graveyard shift--midnight to eight in the morning. So I was able to keep on the day shift.

After only a couple of months, I was promoted to supervisor and I became the supervisor of my unit. Therefore, I now had to follow that around. In other words, I would work two weeks on the day shift, two weeks on the swing shift from four to midnight, and two weeks on the graveyard shift. As I mentioned, I had an ulcer and that's why I was rejected from

the army, and after I had been on that job for nearly eighteen months, my ulcer hemorrhaged because I really wasn't able to sleep. I could not do that graveyard shift. I'd come home and try to sleep in the daytime--and it really didn't work, and so I got sick and I was kept home. In those days there wasn't even room in the hospital for me, so my doctor had me stay home, and my poor wife, she was always very frightened about doing it, but she had to stick needles into me four times a day. I was much more courageous than she was and I told her, "It's okay." But anyway, I was in bed for about six weeks or so.

It took a long time to recover, and when I was well enough--and that was probably a matter of three months or so--I was able to return to that job. But my doctor said that I really should see if I could get dismissed. And the government did give me a dismissal from that job. So I was now released from that, and it was at this particular time that this friend of ours--Isabel and her husband--came to visit us and she said, "You know, you're really being wasted here. You ought to move to New York, you would have much greater opportunity there." And this was now '44.

Moving to New York City and Studying with Monteux in Hancock, Maine: 1944

Sheinfeld: I have to go back now a bit in time. About four years prior to this, around 1940, Pierre Monteux came to Chicago, not conducting at the regular concerts, but conducting in the summer at Ravinia. That was a series--they would give four concerts a week and each concert would have only one rehearsal.

We were not yet married at the time, but we already knew each other, and our friend Hal, who was Isabel's brother, had now become my closest friend and had already introduced Dorothy and me to each other. The three of us decided that we wanted to go and hear Monteux, go to Ravinia, and we drove there. It was about thirty miles north of Chicago and we drove there and we heard that first concert. I had heard of him after all--I knew of Monteux. It was overwhelming! He was so marvelous that we decided that we'd go back and hear the second concert. And then we decided to hear the third, and we decided to hear the--so we heard all four concerts that he gave that year. He came just for one week. But he came for four years in a row, each time for one week. And we heard all sixteen concerts that he gave. And it was absolutely exciting.

Dorothy and I were married now, and in 1944 we were going to move to New York, but at the very last concert that Monteux gave, concert number sixteen, I had heard that Monteux gave conducting lessons, and I went backstage and met him and he was very nice and he spoke with me. I told him that I had heard all of his concerts--which was very true--and how much I loved them, and I said that I would like to study conducting with him.

He said to me that he had no opening. He accepted only six or seven students, whatever it was, and that he had a full class. But he took my name and address and he said that if an opening occurred, he would get in touch with me. And sure enough, some student dropped out, and I got a letter from him, a telegram saying that I could come and study with him. He taught just in the month of August.

Crawford: In Maine, is that right?

Sheinfeld: In Hancock, Maine, which was I think about eleven miles from Bar Harbor [with an East Coast accent]. That's where they lived. And he taught there, and he had just that one class, and he gave ten private lessons, that was it. I ended up going there four years, so I had forty private lessons with Monteux. But anyway, to get back to this first time--how did Monteux come to be in Hancock, Maine, of all places?

Crawford: I think Doris Monteux was from Maine, wasn't she?

Sheinfeld: Yes, there were three Hodgkins' daughters, Gene Hodgkin's daughters. The eldest was Doris, who became Madame Monteux--we used to call her "Mum." And the middle one, Hilda, became the wife of the famous dance band master, Meyer Davis, who was very wealthy, and the youngest sister, Charlotte, married David Michelin who was Meyer Davis' manager. And what was interesting about that, Caroline, was that here were three New England Yankees, all three of them married Jews. Because Monteux was a French Jew and Meyer Davis, of course--well, anyway, that's how Monteux came to be in Hancock, Maine. And they would spend the entire summer there. And I was accepted and I came there.

That was in the summer of '44, and my intention was to live in New York and to ultimately get some job maybe playing in the Philharmonic or whatever. There were lots of opportunities there--and for doing my composing. And it was there that my friends had asked me to come.

But I want to also mention something else. Dorothy had worked for this man whose name was Oscar Lange, and although the name was German, he was Polish. He had been the head of the economics department at the University of Chicago, but now he was in New York. When Poland we reconstituted after the war, he became the Polish delegate to the United Nations. Dorothy had actually been working in New York for--I wish I could remember her name because it was an old New York name--van something or other. She was a very nice woman. But when Oscar went to the United Nations he asked Dorothy to become his secretary, and so she became his secretary there. When I first moved to New York, I wasn't even allowed to work, because the union has peculiar rules.

Crawford: You have to be there a certain period first, don't you?

Sheinfeld: Six months. I was allowed to take what they called casual jobs, but no regular jobs.

Crawford: That would be because of competition with other musicians?

Sheinfeld: That's right. Anyway, Dorothy was the one who really worked at that time, and so I went up to Hancock, Maine, I went on my own. I took my violin along with me and I'm glad I did, actually. I hadn't practiced for a long time because I had been working on this job with the government and at one time I was a bit in despair; I thought to myself, "I'll probably never play again," because whatever time I had, I composed. That always came first.

But I took my violin along with me and I began to practice, and I noticed to my delight that yes, I could play. And at the end of that first summer, at the end of our ten lessons, I discovered that they had a custom there and that was that they gave a concert. And during the times that we were taking lessons with Monteux, he sometimes would gather whatever people could play and someone else would even sit at a piano and play, and the conducting students would conduct.

Monteux sometimes sat in--he had originally been a violist and had played for Brahms' music with the composer present. He told us Brahms was very pleased and complimented him very highly. Monteux told us this story. So he would sit next to me and play viola, of course he could no longer play. I can no longer play, I know exactly how he felt. But when I say no longer play, I can take the violin and play but I wouldn't even want to hear myself play.

Crawford: Because of agility?

Sheinfeld: Oh, well, I no longer have any callouses. It's all gone and that's all. I can play, I can still play technically, but I mean the real skill is gone. Anyway, Monteux sat next to me and so obviously he heard me play. So that was one thing. When our season was coming to an end, he asked me if I would play at the concert, and I said, "Sure."

There was a boy who was sixteen years old and he was already a brilliant pianist and his name was Leon Fleisher. And Leon was there, and so the two of us played the Cesar Franck Sonata at the concert. But that was it. Monteux did not say anything to me.

The next day, my colleagues told me that I had made quite an impression on *maître*. I had made quite an impression on Monteux, but Monteux did not say anything to me. I still had one more lesson left, and I had my lesson and then I returned to New York.

IV COMING TO CALIFORNIA: 1945

Pierre Monteux Extends an Invitation to San Francisco

Sheinfeld: It was at this time that I discovered that Reiner was auditioning people for viola. And these friends of mine, Isabelle and her husband, Barnett, were very knowledgeable, and said, "You know, David, you ought to audition. You ought to play for Reiner. Reiner has a big reputation here, and if you would play in the orchestra just for one year, it would open a lot of doors for you here in New York." So as I've already told you about this, I went and auditioned for Reiner and by golly, I was the one who got the job. I was due to leave in just a few days for Pittsburgh when Monteux came to New York as guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic. I knew where he was staying and I called the hotel and got his room and he answered the telephone.

Crawford: Where was his hotel?

Sheinfeld: The Pierre--well, where do you think he would stay? [laughter] He was very cordial when I told him who I was, and I told him that I had just signed a contract a couple of days before to go and play viola with the Pittsburgh Symphony. He said, "But David, why didn't you tell me that you were willing to leave New York? I could use you in San Francisco." So I said to my wife, "We're really going to be in Pittsburgh just one year!"

When I went back to Hancock, Maine, I again had my violin with me and at the end of that year, Monteux again asked me to play and this time I played a whole series of pieces, and as I was walking off, afterwards, Monteux was sitting in an end seat. He said, "Bravo, David!" So I knew that I was in. And sure enough, when I went for my next lesson, he asked me to come to San Francisco.

But by then something had intervened. I told you about having worked on the WPA theater project, and now the head of the theater project, the man who had been the head was now connected with this advertising agency and his assistant was planning to produce a play in New York. The play was *Much Ado About Nothing*--Beatrice and Benedict--and they had already lined up two very well-known actors. The actress, I don't know if you would have remembered or known that name, that was Jane Cowl. But the actor I think you would know, that was Robert Donat, the father of the ACT actor.

Jane Cowl was going to do the role of Beatrice and Robert Donat was signed to do the role of Benedict. I had gone to see the producer, George Kondolf was his name, so he turned me over to Martin Burton who was his assistant, and sure enough Martin Burton asked me if I would do the incidental music for this play, which of course I was glad to accept.

So that thing was hanging in the air. It was very, very difficult in those days--remember the war was still on and people were hungry for all kinds of entertainment. As one waggish critic remarked--he said, "If they were giving one of the Greek tragedies there would be an audience lined up all the way around the block to get tickets."

Anyway, they were not able to get a theater and when Monteux asked me to come to San Francisco, I told him that I would be very happy to come, but that I was signed up to do this incidental music. Monteux told me that I could wait until even one week before they started rehearsing, and if I'd let him know by then, he would still hold a place for me. And sure enough, that project folded. They weren't able to get a theater! So I sent a telegram to Monteux and told him that I would come--and he immediately answered and told me to come.

Settling in San Francisco and a 1946 Commission for the San Francisco Symphony

Sheinfeld: So we arrived in San Francisco in November of '45, just one night before the first rehearsal was to take place. In those days the symphony started late because about two-thirds of the members of the symphony played the opera and they had to wait for that, and so that was why it started that late. So anyway, I arrived in San Francisco and Monteux thought very highly of me. And I practically worshipped him. I loved him. I so much admired him--

Crawford: Everybody loved Monteux.

Sheinfeld: I considered it an honor to play in the first violin section of the orchestra for him, and by the middle of that season--we were very close and he was always talking with me, and I would often go to see him after a concert in his room, and he was always glad to see me.

At one of the orchestra breaks--the orchestra usually after about an hour is given I think about a ten- or fifteen-minute break--Monteux was staying right up on the podium there and I went up and we started to talk. Monteux said, "David, I want you to write a work for me and the symphony. If you can have it done, I'll do it next season (1946)." And so of course I was just walking on air.

Crawford: Your first big commission.

Sheinfeld: Yes. They made it a formal commission, and the Monteuxs even gave a small dinner party. They lived in the Fairmont Hotel, which always saved for them the same suite of rooms, they occupied a whole suite of rooms. And the Monteuxs gave a dinner for us downstairs in one of the Fairmont restaurants. It was a small dinner but they invited--of course Dorothy and I were there--and the critics were there; there were two: I think Frankenstein and Fried.

Crawford: That was *Adagio and Allegro*?

Sheinfeld: Yes, that was a big success. Frankenstein called it one of the best new works that he had heard in years. But that's jumping ahead--the Monteuxs had a dinner party in which they announced that I had been commissioned to write this work, and so I really got to work and I finished it. I got it done in time. I usually work slowly but I worked very hard and I got it done.

Conducting *Adagio and Allegro* on Tour and Thoughts about Composing ##

Sheinfeld: Monteux played my work on three concerts one weekend; Saturday night was going to be the last concert, and we all came with our bags packed because after the concert we were taking the ferry to Oakland, and there we boarded a train which was going to be our home for the next eight weeks.

So we started on this tour, and when I arrived that evening for the very first concert that we were giving somewhere in Texas, I was told by the personnel manager that Monteux wanted to see me. And so I went in and he said, "David, your piece was such a big success that I decided to do it in a few places on the tour and I want you to conduct it." So, now I had to call Dorothy right away and tell her that I needed to have my score and parts to the work, which were left in the library.

Crawford: Had it been published, formally?

Sheinfeld: Oh, no, no. It had just been done. It was that week that it had been done, so that's it, it had not been published or anything. But fortunately the son of our librarian had the key to the library, and Dorothy got in touch with him and they went into the library, and since we were starting immediately on the tour, my music was right on the table. Right there. So they found it. I directed Dorothy what city in Texas to have it sent to and the music came in time.

Monteux had me do it in Madison, Wisconsin, and Vancouver, British Columbia, and I conducted it in both places. It was supposed to be done in another city, but Monteux's assistant said he was going to conduct the concert and he really wanted to have the whole concert, so they removed my work. Actually he was nice enough and came and told me that he had done that and he apologized--so anyway, I did it in two cities.

Crawford: Did you think that you wanted to conduct at that point?

Sheinfeld: Well, yes, I did. I did think that I wanted to conduct. I especially conducted my piece well in Vancouver. I really obviously did a good job because when Monteux came on the podium to start the second part, he turned to me and smiled and bowed and I knew that I had made a good impression. And then Dorothy came to meet us on the ferry after we left the train in Oakland, and Monteux came over to her and he said to her, "I was proud of David the way he conducted in Vancouver." So of course I was thinking of being a conductor.

Crawford: Had you finished at Hancock?

Sheinfeld: Well, I didn't know that I was finished. Now this was '47, you understand. The tour was from March, yes, it was in '47. And when we returned, Monteux also had me conduct my work at Stanford. At that time we gave a whole series of concerts, about eight concerts a year at Stanford. And it was remarkable

what a great mastery of rehearsing technique this man had! Since a number of Stanford people would come up and hear our regular concerts in San Francisco, the week that we were going to give a concert in Stanford Monteux just couldn't repeat the whole program, so at least half of the program would be new works.

I think our concerts were on a Tuesday night in Stanford, and he would take part of the Tuesday rehearsal to rehearse the new things that we were going to do at Stanford, and then we would actually do it at Stanford. So he had me conduct my work on one of these occasions, and he also did it with the Chicago Symphony.

Crawford: How was that performance received?

Sheinfeld: I got very good reviews, I still have them somewhere, I think. Dorothy certainly saved those things. She even saved--I discovered not long ago, she saved a watch that my quartet, my original quartet had given me when I was ready to leave for Italy. And I know the watch of course doesn't work anymore but she saved it because it's got that inscription on it "To David, From your String Quartet," and so on. So yes, I was thinking of being a conductor.

The Birth of Sons and the Decision to Focus on Composing; Last Year at the Monteux Conducting Class

Sheinfeld: And then Dorothy--when we returned from our trip, Dorothy told me that she was pregnant. And so we were expecting our first child, who was born in April of '48. By the way, I had a very nasty sense of humor. Dorothy and I were married on April 12, this was in '42; our son, Dan, was born on April 13 in '48. But I used to tell people deliberately--this was when we already lived in San Francisco--I would say to them that we were married on April 12 and our son, Dan, was born on April 13 and I would pause, and I would allow an interval of embarrassed silence and then I would add, "six years later." And so that was so--okay. But anyway, that's how it worked--it was peculiar, because both of our sons are April babies. Our son, Paul, was born four years later on April 26.

Crawford: Good month.

Sheinfeld: When our son Dan was born in April of '48, I sat down just by myself and I thought things over very carefully. I felt that

now I had the responsibility of a baby--we had a child, and we had to take care of that child. And I was wondering to myself if I should go back to the Monteux class. And by that time he had a class, he already initiated that class in the year '47. It was a whole class, there were a lot of people in the class. We had a regular orchestra.

Crawford: So you got a lot of experience?

Sheinfeld: Yes. Quite a number of people--because students would sit in and there would be musicians who'd come and visit and play with us.

Crawford: You had a full orchestra?

Sheinfeld: I won't say a full orchestra, but enough to be able actually to point to the first violins or--you see? And to conduct that way. So I was thinking to myself, and I felt that I was not fast enough: I couldn't both conduct and compose. I felt that I just--I really couldn't do that. And also I felt that I was too shy a person. I wasn't sure that if I would get something in some community--one of those orchestras--whether I could handle that kind of thing, and all the social things that went with it. And that had to go. I felt that that was just not my character. I decided that I would not go back, and I did not return to Hancock, Maine.

Crawford: But you would have, if you had wanted to be a conductor, you would have just kept going in the summer?

Sheinfeld: I may have already told you this, but Monteux himself said to me--I think it was in '47. I still remember his words: he said, "David, if you would devote yourself to conducting, really devote yourself, you will be a very fine conductor. I don't think that you'll be a great conductor, but you'll be a very good one and good enough to conduct a major orchestra." That's what he said at the time. But I didn't think that I could both compose and conduct. I could think of a number of reasons for not conducting, so I decided that I'd just forget about it and devote myself to composing.

Adagio and Allegro (1946); Concerto for Orchestra (1949); Fantasia (1951)

Sheinfeld: I wrote another work in 1949, by the way, a *Concerto for Orchestra* which William Steinberg saw before Monteux did.

William Steinberg later premiered a work of mine at Aspen one year--1954--when he was the music director and he formed a high opinion of me.

Crawford: Steinberg commissioned a work?

Sheinfeld: No, I had shown it to him and he just did it. And then Jorda did it.

Crawford: *Fantasia*?

Sheinfeld: *Fantasia*. Jorda did that with the San Francisco Symphony in 1956. But anyway, this was my *Concerto for Orchestra*. I don't know why I showed that to Steinberg before, but Monteux knew that, because he said to me, "David, why didn't you show me? Steinberg told me that he had seen a work of yours that he liked." So I showed it to him and Monteux did two movements (1951). And as it turned out, he was absolutely right because the remaining movements really aren't good. But he did two movements down in Stanford. And he even apologized to me. He said, "You know, David, I didn't realize how difficult this work is. I should have rehearsed it more. I'm going to have an additional rehearsal."

He had an additional rehearsal, and he did it on "The Standard Hour," a radio program in those days which was broadcast on Sundays.

Crawford: Oh, I remember it.

Sheinfeld: In '51, he had me conduct it at a special concert given for the state of Israel, on which every composer was Jewish. He did Mendelssohn, and a violin concerto by Ernest Bloch, and he had me conduct my *Concerto for Orchestra*. So that goes back to '51. Later Monteux did the whole work with the San Francisco Symphony, and I was really launched as a composer.

Crawford: You were, weren't you?

Pierre Monteux and Enrique Jorda in San Francisco: 1935-1952;
1952-1963 and Meeting Dmitri Mitropoulos

Sheinfeld: Then I met Dmitri Mitropoulos, who was guest conductor of our orchestra. Monteux was already gone, he was no longer the principal conductor then--

Crawford: Jorda had been there.

Sheinfeld: Jorda was the conductor. And Mitropoulos came as guest conductor. And I showed him the score of my *Adagio and Allegro* and he heard the tape, and he told me that he would do that. And I was just walking on air.

Crawford: Where would he have done it?

Sheinfeld: Probably with the New York Philharmonic, but I'm not sure about that. But something happened--he was very close friends with Roger Sessions and Sessions interceded for a pupil of his--who was actually very good--and that was Leon Kirchner. And so Mitropoulos, the next time he saw me he said he was sorry but he wouldn't be able to do my work because he was going to do the other piece--but when I had my *Concerto for Orchestra* performed and Mitropoulos came here again, I showed him the score and he looked at it. He had it with him and then a few days later he spoke with me and he said, "This is an excellent piece." And he said, "I'm going to perform it."

Of course I had been wounded by that first time--so I said, "Are you just being polite, or do you really like my work?" And he said, "No, Mr. Sheinfeld, I see composers all over the country and I absolutely consider you to be one of the best that I have seen. I promise you that I will do it and I will do it with the New York Philharmonic." He made that promise, and he meant to keep it. He was a very decent person and he was an outstanding interpreter of twentieth-century music, but he didn't know yet that when the New York Philharmonic extended his contract they wrote a proviso into it that he should not do as much twentieth-century music as he was doing. So he again had to withdraw.

Crawford: Two times!

Sheinfeld: And he told me that he was sorry, but he would not be able to do my piece--so that was the end of that. By then people knew about me here and I was beginning to get performances.

When we started on our tour back in '47, we had a special arrangement: the Los Angeles Symphony came up that week and played our subscription concerts here, and we played their subscription concerts that week in Los Angeles. There were people who knew about the work that I had done on the WPA project and I had two offers to work in the studios in Hollywood. One was for radio and one was by someone in what at that time was really fledgling TV. I could have had a job as arranger, but I had had this very successful performance of my

Adagio and Allegro. I felt very encouraged, and also I really did not want to do that kind of pop music; I was too seriously composing, so I turned those down. I would have made ten times the amount of money--about ten times what I have ever made here, but I have never regretted that decision. So that was that.

And I think that that about takes you at least into the start of my composing here. I went on from there, and as I said, Steinberg had done my *Fantasia* and Jorda had done it here.

And as for Jorda, he was actually a quite intelligent man. He had originally been an organist and obviously trained the choir or whatever. When Jorda did choral things, works such as Handel's *Messiah* or Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*, he did them very well.

Crawford: Because he knew choral work?

Sheinfeld: He suddenly became a different person. There was a certain kind of command there. When he did orchestra things, there were certain things he did beautifully: things that required color and so on, he did, but otherwise he was a kind of, shall I say, talented amateur--

Crawford: Really? And is that what happened with your *Fantasia*?

Sheinfeld: It was really awful, I am sorry to say, when he had to accompany a soloist. And numbers of soloists complained. Nathan Milstein was one of them, and he was so angry that he did it right in front of all of us at in the orchestra--I think he was doing the Brahms *Violin Concerto* or something. But Milstein was very angry. And it was all justified, Jorda was so stiff he simply couldn't--

Crawford: So you're talking about Jorda now?

Sheinfeld: Jorda--he simply could not follow! You know, the greatest accompanist was Monteux. He was simply fabulous. I remember an instance, Horowitz was the soloist and I think it was one of the Rachmaninoff piano concerti, and I was on the stage, and as I told you, I was quite close with Monteux. And Horowitz was talking with Monteux and playing some passages and he said, "Maestro, when I do this, you know, I'm going to be playing it like that and I hope that you'll follow me." And Monteux said to him, "I won't follow you, I'll be with you." The two greatest accompanists were Monteux and Ormandy. That was a great strength of Ormandy's.

Crawford: What are the strengths of a great accompanist?

Sheinfeld: To anticipate what the soloist is going to do and to just be right with the soloist and to sort of get into the mind of the soloist. And play the orchestra part to make it fit with the soloist's interpretation--not just notes and time, but with the actual interpretation so it becomes one. It's a special thing. Monteux was wonderful. And I knew what he meant when he said to Horowitz, "I won't follow you, I'll be with you." You know.

Years later when Monteux was no longer with the orchestra, we had a pianist who had a big reputation, he went by just the name of Solomon, a British pianist. He played with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and at the end of his tour when he was returning to England, he was interviewed in New York, and he was asked what was his most memorable experience. And he said his most memorable experience was playing with the Philadelphia Orchestra and having Ormandy accompany him. And that was absolutely correct because Ormandy was a great accompanist. I understood when he made that remark, I knew what he meant. But he should have played with Monteux, and then he wouldn't have said that his most memorable--because Monteux was even greater.

William Steinberg Commissions *Etudes* (1959)

Sheinfeld: Now, in about 1959, I got a letter from Steinberg, and he told me that he was conducting at the Hollywood Bowl and he asked if I would like to come down and hear a concert. I knew perfectly well that he wasn't just asking me to come and hear a concert, but of course I accepted.

I came down there and I went right there at the first rehearsal, and I saw him at the orchestra break, right away, so he knew I was there, and he said that he wanted me after the rehearsal to come back with him to his hotel. So we did, and we had lunch together and we went up to his room and we talked a lot about music.

He told me he enjoyed conducting the San Francisco Symphony and what a wonderful, flexible orchestra it was, because they also played the opera, you know, and so--

Crawford: Was the quality very high in the fifties?

Sheinfeld: Well, Monteux kept the quality high when he was here even though there was no pension fund and players really played maybe beyond what they normally would play. But he was such a great conductor that he really got the best out of them.

Crawford: Players really had no security then, did they? There was no tenure?

Sheinfeld: No, there was no tenure or anything. That came later. But the orchestra was still good. And Steinberg liked it. And as I say, it was flexible because a lot of them played the opera, you know. Well, anyway, of course the reason was that he commissioned me--when we were up in his room talking. And so we decided on this work which I was going to call *Four Etudes for Orchestra*. He agreed on that and he did that with the Pittsburgh Symphony in 1959. Later Jorda had me do it with the San Francisco Symphony, so I conducted that here in 1962.

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Sheinfeld: Steinberg loved his wife very deeply and she died at quite an early age--I had met her in Pittsburgh when he did my *Four Etudes* there. He never recovered from that and he became quite ill, and he moved to the Bay Area down the Peninsula somewhere, near Redwood City.

I remember Steinberg was going to conduct a concert in Concord at the Concord Pavilion with the San Francisco Symphony, and he asked me about a program and I said, "Well, I would suggest a work with a big orchestra like Mahler." And sure enough he did one of the Mahler symphonies.

But as for *Four Etudes*, it marks the end of an era because certain things were going on in my mind. I was not happy about the language or the exclusive use of that language and I was beginning to arrive at a new way of composing.

Crawford: How was it to conduct your home symphony?

Sheinfeld: I must say to you that I was very nervous. That was another reason that I sort of decided against conducting, because I felt I was just too nervous a person. And that's a debilitating thing. When I look back upon it now, I think to myself, how foolish that is! I no longer would be nervous and I no longer am nervous, but I was nervous in those days and it just got in my way.

Crawford: Did they respond to your music?

Sheinfeld: Oh, absolutely! Oh, sure. They responded. And one year I even conducted some youth concerts. I mean I did the first movement of the Beethoven Fifth Symphony and the orchestra absolutely loved what I did. But I remember how nervous I was, before. Once I got on the podium I forgot about being nervous and I went about my business. But it was very hard on me, and I had glaucoma and it used to affect me. I'd be backstage and then all of a sudden I'd look at a light and I'd see a whole halo, which meant that my tension had gone up, you know. And I'd go to see my doctor and of course take some medication, but I guess I just wasn't made at that time, for that. It's foolish but that's the way it is--some people are terribly nervous.

Crawford: Was Monteux nervous?

Sheinfeld: He was a bit nervous because I'd see him before a concert: he'd be standing right backstage and he'd sort of be twirling--he'd get a very serious look on his face and he'd sort of be twirling his baton. And I could see that he was a bit nervous. Reiner got nervous--the great Fritz Reiner who had every little gesture figured out, but I would see that sometimes his baton shook like that--

Crawford: That makes for a better performance, maybe, if there's a little nerves?

Sheinfeld: It certainly did with Monteux. With Reiner, everything was already thought out in advance. Not taking anything away from that because there were certain things that he did that were simply superb. But he did get in his own way because he made his orchestra's--we were all too self-conscious. You had to remember just to play this thing with this part of the bow and don't use one-eighth of an inch more--you'll hear about--you'll hear from him, you know--so that doesn't allow an orchestra to sound--to play free.

He was a great conductor, but Monteux was greater. And I knew it right away. And there was one thing about Monteux: he was not self-conscious. He knew that he was good, and the music came first. There was something so clear about his conducting. If we were playing a new work and if someone momentarily felt a bit unsure, if you looked up at the baton, you knew exactly where you were somehow. It was just--that's the way it was. And he made it look so simple that people who were not musicians didn't even realize how fantastic he was. And he was fantastic! That was the greatest baton technique that I have ever experienced.

When the orchestra was on tour we gave two concerts in Carnegie Hall, and Toscanini was present at the first concert in a box right over the stage, and we did the Brahms First Symphony, and Toscanini jumped up and yelled, "Bravo!" He really did that--and Monteux was absolutely delighted. I think those were probably the two best around. I know of Furtwängler, but I never saw Furtwängler. He is supposed to have been marvelous, but Furtwängler never conducted here and I never saw him. So of the conductors I know, Toscanini and Monteux were the best.



David Sheinfeld in the 1920s



David Sheinfeld, right, in Rome with a friend while studying with Respighi, 1929.



Pierre Monteux (center) with conducting students in Hancock, Maine, in the 1940s. David Sheinfeld second from the left.



Rehearsing with the San Francisco Symphony, 1950s.

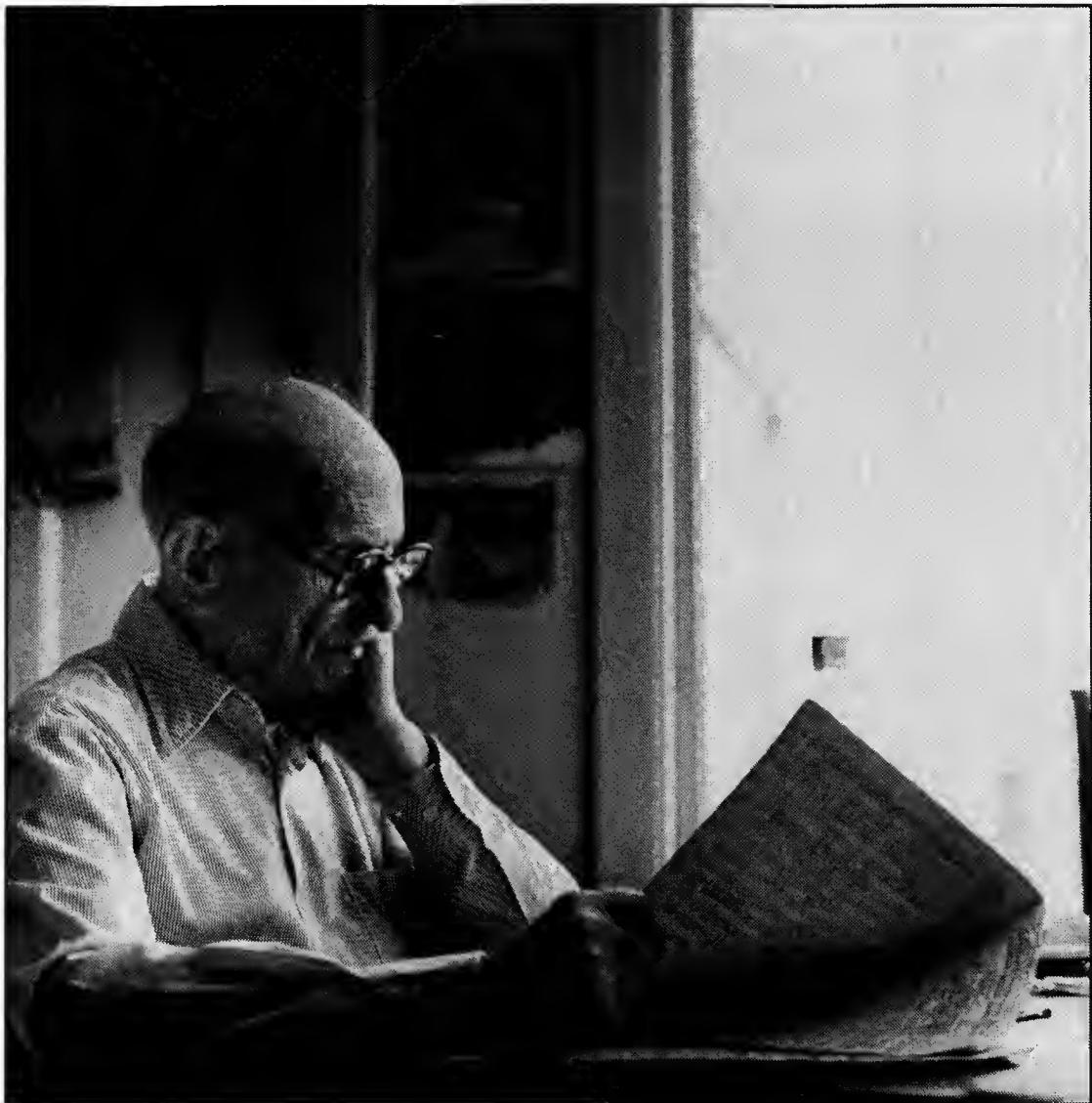
Paul Mark, photographer.



Pierre Monteux celebrating his seventy-fifth birthday with members of the San Francisco Symphony, April 4, 1950.



David and Dorothy Sheinfeld aboard the Oriana, enroute from England to the Adriatic, in the mid-1970s.



At work in San Francisco, 1998.

Marshall Berman, photographer.



David Sheinfeld at work on $E=mc^2$.

V LIFE AS A COMPOSER AND ORCHESTRA PLAYER

[Interview 3: April 14, 1998] ##

Thoughts on Independence and Influences; the Kolisch Quartet,
Bartok and Stravinsky

Crawford: Last week we talked about your first commissions and your work in the symphony, but we didn't really talk about the language of your music from the forties and fifties--your approach, your style, and your influences. It is interesting that at least three of the San Francisco Symphony conductors--Ozawa, Jorda, and Monteux--commissioned you before 1960, and you said that you rejected the musical language from that earlier period.

Sheinfeld: It wasn't the language that I rejected. Stravinsky changed the way--with *Le Sacre*--changed the way we think or we thought about rhythm and so on. That was the great revolution that he started with *The Rite of Spring*. It was interesting that in the year he came out with *Le Sacre*, Schoenberg came out with *Pierrot Lunaire*. And Schoenberg changed the way we think about tonality.

I was using a new language of rhythm, in other words, I was still pretty much using a language of tonality rather than atonality at that time--in the late forties and early fifties. But I have always had an open mind and I was beginning to use the atonal language more, also.

Crawford: How would you describe it, this style of those early works?

Sheinfeld: Difficult to describe. I have always regarded myself as an independent person; that was a characteristic of mine. I am a bit of a rebel in that sense.

Crawford: I think that's recognized in your music.

Sheinfeld: But I am a bit of a rebel, generally, not just in music: just in the way things go on. Don't misunderstand me, I'm not standing ready to overthrow--[laughter]--by no means, I am not that way at all. But when I say I am a bit of a rebel, I just mean that I think that even our human institutions are not necessarily sacrosanct and should continue forever. I think we ought to recognize that things are changing and try to save the great civilization of our western culture.

In that sense, even though I said to you that I'm a bit of a rebel; actually, I regard myself as conservative because I very much would like this great culture--the culture of, let's say, Shakespeare and the great composers like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and so on; great writers like Shakespeare, like Goethe, like Dante, like Milton, all the great English writers, and so on; and the great civilization of a Newton and an Einstein, and so on--I would like that to be preserved. I don't want to see that going down the drain!

But I am a rebel in the sense that I feel that our political systems allow a tremendous disparity. There are too many people who can hardly feed themselves while others have so much wealth that they couldn't possibly, they couldn't possibly use it--they can't even use it! I would regard them as misers, Silas--was that his name?

Crawford: Silas Marner?

Sheinfeld: Silas Marner--certainly, yes. I regard them as misers, you know. And it's in this sense that I am rebellious. I know when I was growing up I would read about people in India who spent their whole lives living outside--they had no shelter of any kind.

Crawford: No, they sleep on the sidewalk.

Sheinfeld: And they live on the sidewalk. And I thought to myself, This will never happen here. But of course, it did happen. There are homeless people. I'm rebellious about that. I can't understand that. There are two basic human requirements--the minimum human requirements: the need for shelter, and the need for food. And it just it drives me crazy when I read about people who don't even have food. When I see pictures of little children anywhere--somewhere in the world who don't even have food, as I say, that drives me crazy.

Crawford: When we're talking about a rebellious spirit--were you a rebel musically? Were you rebelling against something in the traditional musical language?

Sheinfeld: Well, I'm going to come to that. Now, that is what happened to me. It was beginning to happen to me in the late fifties. You asked me about the language that I was using first of all. I would say, although I have always regarded myself as independent, I was writing music which still had tonal aspects to it.

Now I will say to you that for me, and I think probably for a great many composers, the five greatest composers, at least up to the end of the forties, that the five greatest twentieth-century composers were--to put them in their styles--they were the three Austrians, the second Austrian school: Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern, and those were the atonal composers. And then the tonal composers (which doesn't really mean tonal, but it means that they had ultimately not abandoned the feeling of tonality), they were Stravinsky and Bartók. Those, for me, were the five greatest composers. There were other great composers, but those were the greatest.

Crawford: When you first heard polytonality in *Petruschka*, did you decide to experiment with it?

Sheinfeld: No. No, I felt and I feel even more strongly today that to be creative means to do something that hasn't been done, so I tried very much to keep myself apart from these great artists. I was aware--and how would I not be influenced by Stravinsky's approach to rhythm and Schoenberg's approach to tonality? But I felt that when I wrote music I ought to be myself. I have always felt that. Whether I wanted to be myself or not, I could not take myself out of this planet.

As I say, ultimately the kind of music--no matter how original one is--the kind of music, the kind of painting that one does, the kind of literature that one creates is due to what has come into one as a person, what one has grown up with and the influences. We can't escape that.

For example, Indian musicians play a music which is very exciting and beautiful, but it's a totally different kind of music from ours because that is their world and they grow up in that world. Their music is completely organized, it allows for a great deal of improvisation but only in certain cases--for instance, within the raga--and the raga must maintain its particular identity.

In one sense we could roughly say that it's like a tone row, but of course I said "roughly" and I emphasize the word roughly. Schoenberg finally started using that in the early twenties. A tone row aims to use all twelve semi-tones, and

then uses them again, but it aims at doing totally different things each time. But the raga must maintain its identity. There are certain little successions of notes that have to be used. And within that the performer, who's also the composer at the moment, is improvising and is creating new kinds of music based on that.

All right. Now the reason that I'm bringing this up is to say that this is a completely different world. An Indian grows up hearing that music and no matter what he would do that is a part of his psychology, he grew up that way. We of the Western world grow up hearing music of our Western culture, music which has a polyphonic basis and so on and so forth. And no matter how independent we think we are and no matter what we do, we are people of our world. So I must first of all make that point.

I tried to be independent, but I was growing up and I was hearing mostly the music of, let's say, the kind of music that a Stravinsky and a Bartók and people they influenced wrote. I have already mentioned to you that I had an encounter with the music of Schoenberg because I heard it in my friend's house, but otherwise that was not being heard in Chicago where I was growing up and it was not being performed there.

I told you I came into contact with the more advanced kind of music that Schoenberg was doing when I lived in Italy. I heard one or two concerts. But actually, it was when I was back here that I got myself a recording of *Pierrot Lunaire* and of Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*.

The third piece of the *Five Pieces for Orchestra* is practically a miracle. It was done around 1905, or '06, and it is music that just hasn't been heard before--different colors and very, very slow changes of harmony. And to think that Schoenberg wrote that work at that particular time, that's why I say I regard that as almost a miracle. Now, I didn't really know that so well at the time. These things came into my consciousness more in the very late fifties or even in the sixties.

The California String Quartet, Roger Sessions

Crawford: So those were the influences, if there were influences, in terms of what you heard. Did Sessions influence you at all?

Sheinfeld: Sessions did not influence me. I recognize that he was a person of remarkable ability and intellect--but I can tell you how I first came in contact with Sessions, it was through a string quartet formed by Felix Khuner, who had been a member of the original Kolisch Quartet.

Crawford: Yes, we have his oral history.

Sheinfeld: I should also say that I first heard all of the six quartets of Bartók when I was back from Italy so it is sometime in the late thirties or early forties, when we were still living in Chicago. The Kolisch String Quartet was brought to the University of Chicago. They were brought to give a series of six concerts in which they played two works. One of the works at each concert was one of Beethoven's last string quartets and the other work was one of the six "Bartóks" and they played all six.

I was invited to that and I went to all six concerts, and I found that that was a remarkable experience. And you know, by the way, that they played all of these works from memory, they did not use music. But I found that a remarkable experience. That was my first encounter with Bartók and I absolutely found these works exciting.

Do you know a statement that Tolstoy made once? It's a very important statement. He said he envies a young person when that young person first comes into contact with a great work of art, at the time when that registers as a great work of art. That was Tolstoy.

Since you asked me about my style, I'm just saying that that must have had a strong influence on me. But Bartók, no matter what he did, ultimately had a basis in tonality. And Stravinsky, no matter what he did, had a basis in tonality until that remarkable man--when he was already about seventy--obviously went through a certain crisis and abandoned tonality. This was because of the tremendous influence that Webern had on him.

He was already, as I say, in his seventies when this happened. He abandoned tonality and came over to atonality, but before then, no matter what he did, it had a tonal basis. At that time--and I still lived in Chicago--I was again invited by the university to attend the lecture that Stravinsky gave.

Of course this goes back so many years ago--it's in the late thirties or early forties at the latest, because I've already mentioned that in '44 we left Chicago. I don't recall

much of what Stravinsky said, but one thing stuck in my mind: somebody asked him a question and Stravinsky said, "Whenever I start working on a new piece, I'm terrified." He had to enter a new something, and that statement still sticks in my mind; that, and hearing the Kolisch do the six Bartók quartets and the last "Beethovens." So my language was pretty much influenced by Stravinsky and Bartók, consciously or unconsciously, more than the atonal composers.

Then when I was already living in San Francisco, from '45 on, I was now coming in contact more and more with the atonal school. And the California Quartet--Felix Khuner organized that and was the first violinist--they played a lot of this sort of thing. And one day they were going to do Roger Sessions' Second String Quartet and they invited me to attend their rehearsals and I heard those rehearsals. To the last rehearsal that they gave of this piece before they actually performed it, I was again invited and I sat with that famous musicologist, Alfred Einstein.

Einstein was a very good friend of Sessions and he was also invited. That was the first--and in fact, I think it was the only time I ever met him, and there was one score that was given to us and so we both sat and followed it together. And I asked him how he felt about Sessions and he said to me he can't really say that he actually likes that music but he respects it. That was his statement.

Crawford: What did he mean?

Sheinfeld: He meant that perhaps that language was a bit beyond him. But here was a person who did not have a closed mind.

Crawford: Well, I think lots of people have said that about your work: that it's very hard to understand but they respect that.

Sheinfeld: Of course! I find it a bit hard at this late date to have people not come to grips with that kind of music. After all, we can't go back. We can't go home again and we can't turn the clock back, that's not the way it works. And we are not going to go back to the time of Mozart, however marvelously beautiful that music is, but that is the music of Mozart's time. And however beautiful Beethoven's music is, it's the music of Beethoven's time.

I started to tell you before, just before I went to fix our tea, Beethoven did this fantastic piece, the *Grosse Fuge--The Great Fugue*--do you know that work?

Crawford: Very well.

Sheinfeld: By the way, let me ask you a question. Do you like that piece? All right, now. Do you know that well, well into this century --into this century--there were an awful lot of people who did not understand that piece from beginning to end? They thought that it was some kind of an aberration and that they couldn't understand how Beethoven had brought himself to do that. There was years ago a work that came out: *The String Quartets of Beethoven*--I'm not sure, I think there was a person by the name of Eric Blom who had written this work. And the thing I'm not sure about was whether he was the one who said it, but in writing about the *Grosse Fuge*, he thought it was a terrible work and he just couldn't understand how Beethoven would have allowed himself to do that. Yet that work takes a gigantic leap into the twentieth century, and is one of music's greatest achievements.

Concerto for Woodwinds and Chamber Orchestra (1957)

Sheinfeld: Years ago right in this house, in fact in this room, we used to play string quartets. One of the players was Denis de Coteau, who is now the director of the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra. Denis played viola and I and another violinist, who had been a pupil of mine in harmony and theory and so on and so forth, we were the violinists and there was a cellist and we used to meet about once every two weeks. This goes way back when Denis was really quite young. My children were young--my older son who turned fifty, yesterday--was in his teens.

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Sheinfeld: My son, Dan, the one who was fifty yesterday, we started out on violin. Well, he expected to sound like his Daddy right away, and of course when he didn't that was it. Then we started him on cello lessons and he was a natural. His teacher always said so--he never practiced and his teacher would always tell us how well he was doing. So, it just didn't work--

Crawford: It often doesn't work out right, for that reason.

Sheinfeld: No, it didn't. And the other son had some lessons in clarinet but also that didn't take. But you know what did take and what they still talk about? Those string quartets they used to hear. I had that regular string quartet that went on for

several years but, often, just symphony musicians would get together and we'd play quartets in each other's houses, too.

Crawford: Did you play with Felix Khuner? I know he lived in Berkeley.

Sheinfeld: No. I played with Felix only once and that goes back to I think the very first year. I think Felix was just curious, so I was invited to some house in Berkeley, somewhere in the Berkeley hills, and Felix and I were the violinists and we played quartets together. But no, we did not otherwise, we didn't play, although I was very good friends with Felix.

Felix, by the way, very much liked that first work that I told you about, that Monteux had commissioned. Of course he was in the orchestra, and I conducted that work of mine at Stanford. I remember afterwards I came on the bus and Felix was already on the bus and when I came on he started applauding and so he obviously liked that. And also it was because of Felix and hearing him talk to me about Schoenberg and everything that I began to draw closer to that music, to the atonal school.

Then I was commissioned to write a work at that time. There was a little symphony, there was a conductor by the name of Gregory Millar who conducted that, and they gave two concerts each time. One was given in Berkeley and one in San Francisco. And Gregory got a commission for me to write the work for the four solo woodwinds and the orchestra.

So I wrote this *Concerto for Woodwinds and Chamber Orchestra* [1957] and in it I, for the first time, used a twelve-tone row. But since I always was stubborn and always was independent, I actually used two rows. And I alternated--I remember that in the first movement, I alternated music written in a row--in other words, atonal music--with a more tonal music after. And the work was actually liked a great deal.

That is one of the works that I ultimately rejected because I felt that I had really outgrown it. I was just a person of kind of slow development and always in the process of development. But anyway, that's what I did in the first movement. In the second movement somehow it just really came up quite strictly twelve-tone.

Crawford: And that was your first twelve-tone music?

Sheinfeld: That was my first attempt at twelve-tone music. And the third movement also was a mixture of serious twelve-tone writing and

freer writing. Even then I--as I say, I had an independent attitude. That was in the fifties.

Twenty-Six Years with the San Francisco Symphony and Compulsory Retirement

Crawford: How about references in your work? I remember that Leonard Bernstein said that he had loved his father's music and if he had to describe what his father wrote, he would say that it was "cowboy songs by Brahms." I'm not implying that you wrote anything of the sort, but what came from your past into your music that could be defined or recognized as references?

Sheinfeld: I don't think there were any. I came out of the performing tradition and that had an enormous impact on me. I have already told you about that early string quartet that I had when I was young. After all, when I went to Italy, which marked the end of my string quartet, that was in '29. I was twenty-three years old. And our string quartet lasted--it really lasted a good three years. I'm not exactly sure about the dates but I know that we were together for a number of years. It could have been more than three years.

Now, that was a great formative experience for me because, as I have already told you, we just played everything! And we even played--and I know I have mentioned to you also we even played the string quartet of Debussy. And that was, after all, that goes back to a time when that was really new-ish music. And we played Ravel's string quartet. We had very open minds. And this was all very important.

In fact, I remained close--very close--friends with these people. Our second violinist and the violist of my string quartet both got into the Chicago Symphony. The oldest one, who was about eight years older than I, was still in the Chicago Symphony when he was seventy. I had to leave the orchestra at sixty-five, they had this rule.

Crawford: Dreadful thing.

Sheinfeld: They had the rule--oh, that was arbitrary! I remember my friend Joe was still in the Chicago Symphony when he was seventy, and they came, they were performing here, and of course they came to visit me. We had lunch together. We were very dear friends, all of us.

So of course I had a lot of contact with these people and they used to tell me about their experiences, both with Solti and with a wonderful--what's the name of the Italian who was a wonderful conductor? It has just slipped my mind, now. They often played with him, together. But in any case, they used to tell me how much they had learned from me[!] when we used to play quartets together and I still remember that. And the other person, who played viola, was still in the orchestra 'til not long--not very long ago and he was already in his middle seventies. And I think it was just that he got a stroke that finally caused him to leave the orchestra there.

Crawford: How did you feel about that compulsory retirement at age sixty-five?

Sheinfeld: I had an ambivalent feeling about that. On the one hand I would have liked to remain in the orchestra--it was a wonderful experience for me due to my own enquiring mind.

For example, I would sit in the orchestra, and you know that that can be a very demanding job and it can also be very boring. And a lot of orchestra musicians were bored: they'd play the same pieces over and over again and they'd hear conductors rehearsing and they'd hear conductors making comments all of which they already know even before the conductor is going to make that comment, you know. And it can be very boring and I have seen that happening to people in the orchestra, but it never happened to me.

Crawford: Why?

Sheinfeld: The reason it didn't happen to me is because I was always primarily interested in composing. I would sit in my chair and I wouldn't allow myself to be bored, but I would sit there and we would be playing a work--a Beethoven symphony, a Brahms symphony, or whatever, Schubert and so on--and I just decided that I would listen very carefully and see how these things were working out and what was happening and so on.

So it was a great experience for me to sit right there in that orchestra and hear these different things happening. And instead of being bored with the fact that we were playing that particular, wonderful Beethoven symphony for about the thirty-five thousandth time, counting rehearsals, I just decided to see how it was evolving, and what was happening with it and so on. So I was not bored, and I didn't allow myself to be bored; I had that particular attitude.

But you see, that was unusual. Most of the people in the orchestra were not composers. In fact, I was almost the only one in the orchestra at that time. And they didn't have that advantage, they just sat there. They had to play and hear some conductor make remarks. And most of the conductors were quite ordinary, even though they didn't think so. They were quite ordinary people and they were not really such great musicians. And you know, you don't fool a symphony orchestra.

Crawford: Was there ever another Monteux? Did the quality ever go back to that level?

Sheinfeld: Monteux was absolutely by far the greatest conductor that I ever worked with. You could not be bored with Monteux. In fact, he was remarkable in that there was no waste of time at rehearsals.

Crawford: But that must have spoken somehow to the musicians, that they were well-prepared. Were you inspired to be prepared?

Sheinfeld: Oh, absolutely. In fact, I'll tell you a very clever thing that Monteux did. We were on our eight-week tour and Monteux began to think that the orchestra was beginning to get a bit slip-shod. After all, we played two or three programs and we played them all the time.

One night, it was in a small town somewhere, we came to play the concert and we discovered that there was a change of program, that we were going to do the Second Symphony of Brahms. Now we had not done it at all that season. It was not played at all in the season of '46-47, not at all. All of a sudden there it was on the stand, and we were going to play it!

That was very clever because of course that put the orchestra right there on its mettle. And Monteux was the man that could do it, of course, because his conducting was so clear. It was just fabulous how in that simple way that-- Reiner, for instance, had a great conducting technique, but he was very conscious that he had a great technique, and you knew it. With Monteux, he just conducted [with a lighter voice] and somehow if we were playing a new work and if for a moment one felt a little bit insecure, you looked up at that baton, and it practically told you what sixteenth note you had to be playing, that's how wonderful it was. So he did that. And he really put us on our mettle. And you know what? We gave an excellent performance of that symphony.

Crawford: No one got bored with Monteux?

Sheinfeld: Well, you didn't get bored because he was just simply a great conductor who didn't waste time. In fact, one of the things he once said to me at one of my lessons was not to talk too much. He said--of course he was also cynical and he also said something that I didn't agree with, but nevertheless, what he said was, "Don't go off and do all kinds of things--and don't tell them the philosophical meaning of this or that. Just tell them loud or soft, or short or long, or *espressivo* or *non-espressivo*--and that's all." And he said, "They're not interested. All they're interested in is collecting their paychecks." Well I didn't agree with that statement, but otherwise I knew exactly what he meant. He was right. And he didn't say any more than he had to.

Monteux was always studying his scores, always. Well as he knew them, he was always studying his scores. We'd be out on the beach in Hancock, Maine--the students--and their house was sort of a bit elevated and Monteux would be sort of on the second floor and he'd be out on the porch which was screened--the whole porch was screened to keep insects out, I guess--and he'd be sitting there at a stand with his scores and preparing his scores for the next season. And he already knew them and he conducted nearly everything from memory. It wasn't like Ormandy who also conducted a lot of things from memory, but he learned them fast and he forgot them fast.

I told you I had known Mitropoulos, also, who was really a great conductor and a great interpreter of twentieth-century music. And by the way, he was a very close friend of Roger Sessions and admired Sessions' work very much. And Mitropoulos had a reputation for having a fabulous memory.

But I could see that Monteux knew all of these works and one day I asked him about that at one of my lessons, about his memory. And he said to me, "David, I can turn the page." That was his way of saying that he practically had a photographic memory. I can still remember that. And I understood that and I absolutely believed him because you know I mentioned that at Ravinia, in Chicago, there was only one rehearsal per concert, and he did that first work of mine there.

When I came there for rehearsals and so on, the orchestra were all thrilled because the week prior to the one when my work was going to be done Monteux had programmed Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Now that's not an easy piece. And one rehearsal: okay? One rehearsal, just like Brusilow.

They told me that at the performance Monteux conducted of course without a score and they said that a couple of players

got lost, and they were excited about this--that Monteux got them out and he knew they were lost and he brought them in at the place where they had to make their entrances and he just had one rehearsal and then doing that from memory. That shows how well he knew that score. This was a great artist, you see --that is what real music-making is about. And with a man like that, you don't get bored.

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Crawford: I know you had conversations with Stravinsky; would you talk about those, and also about how Stravinsky took on serialism?

Sheinfeld: Stravinsky came to serialism not out of Schoenberg but out of Webern. He absolutely adored Webern's music and that's what brought him to serialism. Now my meeting with Stravinsky--that was a lovely moment in my life. I was in the orchestra at that time, and it was the last time that Stravinsky came here.

He came with Robert Craft, and the whole program was devoted to Stravinsky compositions. There were a couple of works which I didn't play. One of them was the *Symphony of Psalms*, which does not use violin. So, okay, I wasn't playing in that and that was conducted by Robert Craft, not by Stravinsky. And then of course, there were those symphonies for winds, just for wind instruments. So there were several works that I didn't play.

When Stravinsky came for that first rehearsal he was sitting as a number of us violinists were just in the auditorium, while that rehearsal was going on, because Craft was conducting both the *Symphony for Winds* and the *Symphony of Psalms*.

We were all around together, and I was a very shy person, but I think mentioned to Stravinsky that I was a composer. And after that he always came over to me; he would see me sitting backstage and he'd come over to me and pull up a chair and start talking to me, and that was lovely.

There was a person in the orchestra who played viola in those days, Manfred Karasik was his name and we called him Monya, that was the Russian equivalent, and Monya said that "when Stravinsky discovered David, he didn't pay any attention to anybody else."

Crawford: Do you remember what he said?

Sheinfeld: Yes. He would tell me about his experiences with orchestras in Europe and America. He felt that the orchestras in our country had one great advantage over the European orchestras, because we had so few rehearsals for new works, whereas in Europe they would really rehearse something for a long time, so we had to learn these things much more quickly, and we did, and he liked that. That was one thing.

Crawford: That you learned work quickly.

Sheinfeld: He liked that. He liked our orchestras. I remember one thing: on that particular program we were going to do a work which he was going to conduct. It was his *Variations for Orchestra*. That was a new work at the time--an atonal work.

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Sheinfeld: We were going to give the first performance in San Francisco of that work of his, *Variations for Orchestra*, and that was in his new style, serialism. And Stravinsky said to me, "Tomorrow I will bring you the score of my *Variations for Orchestra* and show you an example of organized cacophony." That's a direct quote. I have never forgotten it. [laughter] And sure enough he came the next day, and I was backstage and he did bring that score and sat down with me and started turning the pages and we looked at that together.

Crawford: Did he look at your music?

Sheinfeld: No, I was much too shy to ask. Oh, I wouldn't have dared to do that. In those days I knew that I wasn't yet a really finished composer. I think I knew that. And I wouldn't have dared to show him anything of mine. I had already written *Confrontations*, I'm pretty sure, and he might have liked that. But I was just delighted to talk with him, and to this day I remember those conversations.

Josef Krips in San Francisco: 1963-1970 ##

Crawford: How about Josef Krips?

Sheinfeld: Krips had certain things that he could do very well. But of course he had absolutely no understanding of twentieth-century music whatsoever. And of course, he never fooled any of us. But we realized that when he did things over and over it was

because he was learning that himself. And you know, this says something about the confidence that a real artist has.

Monteux would not hesitate. If he was doing, let's say, a new work at rehearsal and sometimes he would make a mistake--after all, that was very rare, but it happened--he would stop and say "Excuse me ladies and gentlemen, that was my mistake."

But when Krips made a mistake, he would never admit that. He would stop and start looking angrily at someone in the back, you know, trying to pretend. And of course it never fooled anyone. We all knew anyway, everybody in the orchestra down to the dumbest member knew that Krips had made that mistake, you know. But he could never admit that.

Crawford: Did he have a bias against women?

Sheinfeld: I don't know. I know that he was very unpleasant with the orchestra and the orchestra finally rebelled. But I can tell you an interesting thing: his first year, I was a member of the orchestra with Krips, but that second year, I had to take that whole year off. That was what I mentioned to you earlier--

Crawford: For the eyes--you had glaucoma.

Sheinfeld: Yes. And actually Krips was very nice and he told me anytime if I wanted to come to a rehearsal or anything I would be welcome and so on and so forth. And so I did on a number of occasions come to rehearsal and sometimes Krips would turn around and he would see that I was there, so he would motion to me and tell me to come and see him during intermission.

On one of these occasions I was with him in his room, it was during the orchestra break, and he was walking up and down in the room [speaking very softly] and then he turned around and he said to me, "Mr. Sheinfeld, I wish I had better relations with the orchestra." And you know I sort of felt a pang about that.

On the one hand, he had made himself so unpleasant--he was always berating the orchestra--not as badly--nobody could do to it as professionally or smoothly as Reiner. Reiner, that was just a part of him to do it. No one could be as good at being nasty as Reiner; [laughter] he was a master of being nasty. But Krips of course wasn't like that, though he was nasty enough. But I actually felt a pang, I really felt sorry.

Crawford: What did you respond?

Sheinfeld: I didn't say anything. I didn't know what to say. I came home and I mentioned that to my wife, what he had said, and it was not totally unexpected because I realized that that was the situation here.

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Sheinfeld: When I came to the first rehearsal after my year's leave, the orchestra just sat there and I realized that something was wrong. They all said they refused to play, they would not work with Krips.

Krips had changed the seating of the whole orchestra, everybody. When I came back I discovered that he wanted me to play in the second violins. But I understood, that was okay with me.

Crawford: Why?

Sheinfeld: Well, I'll have something further to say about that. The orchestra was just totally in rebellion because he had changed the seating of a lot of people.

I can give you an answer right now, in advance about that. Krips called me into his room at a later time and he said, "Mr. Sheinfeld, I want you to know that the reason I put you in the second violins--I know that you've had problems with your eyes and you have been in the orchestra for many years," and he said, "Just take it easy." He said, "So that is the only reason why I put you in the seconds." That was his explanation to me. He didn't have to explain that at all, but anyway, and as far as I was concerned, I really didn't care because I had been nervous because for years before I'd had so much problems with my eyes. I had to sit practically that close to the music.

Crawford: Before your surgery?

Sheinfeld: Before my surgery. I was delighted when I actually was back in the orchestra that all of a sudden I could see again and it was a great relief for me. But I understood what Krips meant and actually I felt that it was very nice of him.

But on that particular occasion, the orchestra was in total rebellion. They had to call the president of the San Francisco Symphony, his name was Philip Boone, at that time. And Phil Boone came down and he talked and the orchestra talked, and he went and talked to Krips, also. The orchestra rebelled about the fact that he was always so nasty, so that

was settled, and it was decided that, "we'll give it a chance." So the orchestra agreed to play, and the next day, when we came to rehearsal, he was on his best behavior.

But he didn't know how to rehearse. I remember, I came home and mentioned to Dorothy, I said, "You know, if he doesn't yell at us, he doesn't know what to do. He doesn't know how to get somebody to do things correctly. That's just his technique, and that's all."

Crawford: He didn't know how to communicate.

Sheinfeld: He did not know how to communicate with people if he didn't yell at them. The year I was out of the orchestra he had scheduled Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celeste*. That's really one of Bartók's three greatest works. And it was beyond him, a bit beyond him.

The woman was actually very competent who played in the second violins and was the official orchestra pianist at the time, Raina Schivo. And her husband had been the English horn player and very good in the orchestra.

Well, anyway, she made some mistake in playing once and the mistake was due to the fact that he actually gave a wrong beat. I knew that work and I saw that. I was present at that rehearsal. And I saw him doing that. He came to her and he said, "If you make that mistake again, I'll kill you!"

So that's the kind of thing--that's the way he acted. But now, after this rebellion, he was trying to rehearse in a different way and he just couldn't. It was pitiful.

Crawford: What was the result?

Sheinfeld: Well, we played. There were certain works that he did very well. He did Mahler beautifully, he did certain works of Beethoven very well, and certain works of Beethoven--since he grew up in Vienna--surprisingly he didn't do them so well. But there were certain pieces where he could really whip up a storm: the Seventh Symphony of Beethoven, he did that beautifully. And he did the *Pastoral* Symphony of Beethoven very well. There were certain things like that. Mahler he did very well. So it was okay. I mean, it worked. And he just had to be careful.

Not long after that was when the orchestra went on strike. We were out for six weeks and the reason was that he insisted upon taking away some of the things we had already

won. We had a five-day week and he wanted to go back to a six-day week. He wanted to call rehearsals at any time he pleased and so on and so forth. And the orchestra would not give in on that and we went on strike. And we won our strike, they had to give in. And of course, although it was not admitted, Krips "resigned."

Crawford: He was let go by the administration?

Sheinfeld: Oh yes. And Ozawa came in to replace him in '70 and so that was that.

George Szell and Twentieth-Century Music

Crawford: Krips programmed your violin concerto in 1967. How did that work out?

Sheinfeld: You know, Krips was very nice about that. He had problems conducting it, but during that week when they were rehearsing, he would call me--he called me into his room on a couple of occasions, and he'd say, "Mr. Sheinfeld, look. How am I doing? How is this--" and he would conduct. And he would ask me for help--he was very nice about that.

Crawford: How many players in that piece? I think Jacob Krachmalnick was the soloist?

Sheinfeld: Krachmalnick was the soloist, yes. It was written for full orchestra, and actually he did it quite well. I even commented to Phil Boone that I was very pleased.

There was a party after the last rehearsal, I think it was at Trader Vic's or something. I'm not sure about that, but I mentioned to Phil Boone how pleased I was and Phil Boone relayed that information to Krips, because Krips was absolutely delighted that I had felt that they had done it well.

There's no question that he was a serious musician. He wanted to do things as well as he could. But it was just that he really did not understand twentieth-century music. He just didn't understand it.

Crawford: He programmed a fair amount of it?

Sheinfeld: Well, you know, it was interesting with Krips: if somebody just mentioned the word Beethoven, Krips would immediately have a

complete Beethoven cycle. And we used to laugh among ourselves about that because on the slightest excuse he would go back-- those were the works he felt comfortable with, you see?

Crawford: Every conductor has preferences, don't they?

Sheinfeld: Yes. Yes, but I mean--well, Monteux could do anything. And I've played with other conductors who could do anything. Not always--for instance, Szell, great conductor that he was, he was not at all at home in twentieth-century music. He was not at all at home, in fact.

I know a very important story about that. Because I had this friend, I told you, who was the concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra and he had been the associate concertmaster with Joe Gingold for a couple of years under Szell before he went back to Philadelphia, and he told me of an incident.

There was a husband and wife piano--duo piano team. I forgot the name, but they had played something that the husband had composed with the Cleveland Orchestra and Szell. And there was a cadenza, which usually the conductor doesn't even conduct, you know. And it was all written in five. And you know Szell couldn't do five, so he felt terribly uneasy.

I heard about this not only from my friend, but from Joe Gingold also, that Szell was standing there and sort of beating, trying to keep with that five and he got totally lost. And it was Joe Gingold who gave the cue to the orchestra and people came in, they saved that performance.

Szell was a great conductor--you know how really outstanding he was? The man had a fabulous memory: he could play every single work of the repertoire at the piano, he could sit down and play it from memory. This friend of mine, my friend Anshel, told me that not so long ago, he had conducted a performance with the Dallas Symphony--and one of the works that he did was *Til Eulenspiegel*. And later he and his wife were in Cleveland and the Szells invited them to their house for dinner, and Szell had heard the tape of that concert.

Then Szell excused himself--he said he wanted to have a talk with Anshel, so they went into Szell's study. And Szell said to Anshel, "You know, you really didn't do that *Til Eulenspiegel* well." And he said, "I'll show you what you should have done." And Anshel said he sat down at the piano and played the entire work from memory--the entire work.

Crawford: But he didn't have a piano score to work from?

Sheinfeld: Oh, no! He totally did it from memory. No, it wasn't like Koussevitsky--he really knew a score, Szell knew the score. But the point is he played everything. In fact, I was told that sometimes somebody would try to trick him and mention some very esoteric work, maybe something that's hardly ever played, and he'd say, "Oh, you mean this?" And he'd go to the piano and play it. They said that actually was scary, I mean, the fact that it was all right there. But my friend Anshel mentioned that he sat there and he told him, "Now this is the tempo. And this is what you should have done, and this is what you should have done," and so on and so forth.

Crawford: He was the soloist in the premiere of your work, right?

Sheinfeld: Anshel was the concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra and he was the soloist in that premiere.

Crawford: Did you perform your piece?

Sheinfeld: No, I didn't. I undoubtedly in those days played passages of it here and for myself, but I didn't ever perform it. But anyway, this is the work that I had submitted to Krips because it was in one sense the most nearly approachable of all my pieces, the one that I felt that Krips would understand the most. It was one of the works which I have since dismissed.

VI A NEW MUSICAL LANGUAGE: 1960S AND 1970S

Patterns for Harp (1962)

Crawford: Let's talk about that. You said that after 1960, you rejected everything but two works.

Sheinfeld: That's right.

Crawford: Which works were those?

Sheinfeld: The two works? The two works that I have not rejected--are the *Four Etudes for Orchestra*, completed in June, 1959, that I did for Steinberg and the *Serenade for Six Instruments* that I did for San Francisco State in October, 1960.

It was actually commissioned by the man who at that time was the principal violist of the San Francisco Symphony, and he raised some money and asked me to write this piece. His name was Ferenc Molnar--you may or may not know that name. The work was written for violin, viola, cello--yes!--violin, viola, cello, clarinet, bassoon, and horn. And Ross Taylor who was the principal horn at that time played. He was also a pupil of mine in harmony and counterpoint and orchestration. But anyway those are the two works that I would keep.

Crawford: Do you want to say a little bit about those, what that was based on, why you were pleased with those? Did they represent a breakthrough?

Sheinfeld: No, they were no breakthrough at all. But I felt that they were good. Well, that brings me to the year '62, if you're ready for that?

I had been troubled for some time by what was going on in music. I felt--maybe it was a part of my rebellious nature, but I was not happy with the fact that, for instance, in atonal

music that one had to do "this" if you were using the twelve-tone row. When you use those notes, you have to go back and use them again, and when you used them again then you had to go back and use them again.

Of course there was a tremendous variety of things that one could do and one was always changing the row, making it totally unrecognizable. But still one had to use those notes! And one had to use those particular sounds, and I didn't like that. I felt that I didn't want to completely abandon earlier ideas of tonality.

I even had a kind of mental picture for myself of a person who decides to varnish the floor of his room and he starts at the door and varnishes and all of a sudden he ends up in a corner and there he is, and so--he has made that mistake and there he is and he's got himself into a corner. And I felt that that was happening with this kind of music.

So I decided that I wanted to use the entire language. I certainly thought atonality was a great new contribution to music, a great way of thinking about music, but not just by itself. I wanted to also feel free to use tonal ideas and so on. And unconsciously some of that was getting into the Four Etudes that I wrote for Steinberg.

There was one, the third Etude, I called *Contrast and Change* and I realized later that I did that because those ideas were already getting in to my music. The difference was that now I knew it! You see, now I was aware of that. And as the year 1962 was upon us, it was all clear in my mind and I knew now that I wanted to embark on a new way of composing, and it was all clear in my mind. So I waited until the end of the symphony season and I sat down and wrote out all of my ideas at that time.

Crawford: In prose or music?

Sheinfeld: No, in words. I wrote out the way I wanted to go. I wanted to use any kind of idea that I wanted. I remember saying that if I even wanted to do something that sounded a little bit like pop music, okay, but don't stay with it, just keep on changing and keep on doing other things. And I sent myself a registered letter, so I have the exact date when I did this.

Crawford: Great! [laughter] Do you have a copy of that? We should put that in the book.

Sheinfeld: Well, I haven't ever opened that letter, it's unopened. But I came across it and it's dated late in May. So it wasn't June, it was sometime late in May at the end of the season that I wrote that out.

But that started me on a new path, I opened up the whole language. I decided not to abandon atonality, which I think is a great contribution to music, but not to use it exclusively; not to abandon tonality but not to use it exclusively, also. I started from there.

It was that very first year in '62 that I got a long-distance telephone call from New York City. The name was Aristide von Würtzler, and he was a harpist who was in residence at Hartt College in Hartford, Connecticut, and he asked me to write a work for harp for him.

How he had come to know about me is something I don't remember, but anyway he asked me, so I wrote a work which I called *Patterns for Harp* and it was the very first piece that I wrote in this new style. He wrote that he had played that in Hartford but he also played it in a recital in New York, and he told me that it was very successful. And I showed it to Marcella DeCray and she took it. She played that on a number of occasions and even made a recording of it at the time. I don't think that the recording is extant anymore, but she did. I have the recording; she played it again last season. She gave a recital at the conservatory and she played it again, and of course I was there. She also played it earlier on, in the early days just not long after I had composed the work. She played it at some music festival in San Jose--and so she played it on numbers of occasions. Anyway that was the first work that I attempted in that new phase. It's about six minutes or something like that.

Crawford: What was new about it?

Sheinfeld: It just uses the whole language--in fact, it might not even sound tonal. For instance, the works that I wrote that were commissioned in after years, they don't sound tonal but they do tonal things, also within the framework of what I'm doing. I mix both tonal and atonal together.

Confrontations for Gerhard Samuel and the Oakland Symphony Orchestra (1969), and Thoughts about New Instrumentations

Sheinfeld: Then shortly after this, I was commissioned by Gerhard Samuel-- do you know that name?

Crawford: Oh yes, Oakland.

Sheinfeld: In those days he conducted the Oakland Symphony [1959-1970], and he did pretty much the sort of thing that Kent Nagano does now: at every single concert he did a new work. He asked me to write a work for him--this goes back into the sixties--and I wrote a work which I called *Confrontations*.

This had absolutely nothing to do with the political climate at the time--there were a lot of, as you know, political confrontations, but I called it *Confrontations* for a different reason, because I was doing a different kind of music here.

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Sheinfeld: This was the first piece that I wrote for orchestra in my new style. I used in it an electric guitar, an electric violin, and an alto saxophone; and these three players sat up in front, they were soloists. And this was one of the confrontations that was going on, that I was using these nonconventional instruments along with the conventional instruments of the orchestra. And another confrontation was that in this piece I deliberately set off very simple tonal moments against very atonal moments and so on. And the piece was a big hit.

Crawford: What kinds of colors were you trying to achieve by putting an alto saxophone with the guitar?

Sheinfeld: That brings up an important thing that went on in my mind at the time. And it's why I did it, Caroline. You see, there was one thing that troubled me a great deal: why was it that people have so many problems coming to grips with atonal music? Why couldn't they understand certain things that Schoenberg had done? For instance, I can find no other word to describe *Pierrot Lunaire* than the word "genius." It's a work of genius and how come people just had such problems with it?

Also they had so many problems with Berg who was easier, somehow, to grasp than Schoenberg or Webern. And the answer came to me and I'm absolutely convinced that I am right. You see, in every previous era in music composers had new

instruments which stimulated them and which inspired them to do new things, or new ideas or new approaches to the way voices were going to be used, or even polyphony was going to be used and this was all a part of music. And there was no problem with audiences because there were new sounds, no one had any preconceived notions about what kind of music should go with those new sounds.

For example, in Haydn's time, the size of the violin had finally been set: Stradivarius himself at times created some violins which are called long strads, but finally he settled the actual size of the instrument. And the chin rest was invented and it made it possible to hold the violin in a different way.

In the baroque era the violin was held against the chest and therefore you could only play up to and as far as the fifth position where the thumb could still support the violin and with a stretch--you could stretch--but that's the reason why baroque music doesn't go beyond that position.

Now with the invention of the chin rest it was possible now to hold the violin on the shoulder, and this made it possible to go all the way, and so on. And Tourte [Francois Tourte, 1747-1835] had finally invented the concave bow instead of the bow being convex. Originally it was a bow, and that's why it was called a bow. And in the baroque era it was already a different kind of instrument; people could manipulate the tension of the hair with the thumb and so on, which made it possible for baroque players to play across all of the four strings of the instrument, and do that. And that's why Bach did so many polyphonic things that are very difficult to do on the modern violin with the modern bow, you see?

But anyway, this happened in Haydn's time and all of a sudden he had a new bow that could do all kinds of techniques that the older bow could not have done, and the violin with the chin rest could go all the way up and down--so! That stimulated Haydn and he therefore wrote those brilliant string quartets that created in a sense the form. Works had been written for string quartet, of course, prior to Haydn, but the string quartet as such had not really been developed.

Of course he had great players: he had Tomasini who was the concertmaster of the Esterhazy Orchestra and a brilliant violinist, and he had great players and so he wrote all of those string quartets. But he was inspired to that by the new kind of possibilities.

In the nineteenth century, the piano had come into its own. Bach had already seen a piano and it didn't especially interest him one way or another, but in the nineteenth century the piano had come into its own. And in Mozart's day it was called the fortepiano, "loud-soft." And later it became pianoforte.

But with the coming of that new instrument, that inspired several generations of musicians. I mean the greatest sonatas of Beethoven, the sonatas that Schubert wrote, which for a long time were unknown, but which are simply a treasure. Of course the great works of Chopin, Schumann--in fact, Schumann was so much a pianist that even in his orchestra works I can practically hear this--I can hear the keyboard. It takes nothing away from his genius: he was a genius. But he was thinking in terms of the piano.

Composing and Process

Crawford: That was a question that I had wanted to ask you. When writing this beautiful piece for harp, didn't you always think about the violin, or the strings there?

Sheinfeld: No, I saw just the harp.

Crawford: You could do that. That's to me quite amazing.

Sheinfeld: Oh, I had always thought of the particular instrument that I was going to compose for. I never thought of one instrument and then transposed--

Crawford: You never did. Is that unusual not to work through your own instrument?

Sheinfeld: Mozart wrote a letter--I'm sure it was to his father. And he was telling his father how he begins a new work, usually when he's on a journey from one city to another and he's in that stagecoach and so on, he decides that he's going to compose--and Mozart, you know, had this fabulous memory, he composed entire works right in his head. They were complete.

Crawford: That's what I understand.

Sheinfeld: They were complete! When you read that when he would play billiards and when he lost his turn he'd go to a table and compose, that is thoroughly silly. He was not composing

anything, he was simply taking advantage of that moment to copy what he had already composed in his mind. You don't go from playing billiards to composing!

When he arrived on one occasion at the city of Linz where he had a distant cousin, his cousin asked him to write a work. And Mozart sat down and he wrote that famous *Linz Symphony*, which is a big work, a long work! To say he turned it out in the space of about forty-eight hours--that's total nonsense. He had already composed that work, and it would just take him that much time to put the notes down on paper, for heaven's sake.

But Mozart starts out by telling his father that when he decides to start a new work he always begins to think of instruments and their sound, and they begin to dictate ideas to him. Now that's the best answer I can give you.

Crawford: That's a very good answer.

Sheinfeld: You see? And when I undertake a work, if I'm writing a work for orchestra, I think of the orchestra. First of all, I'm not a pianist. I don't make a piano score and then orchestrate it, you see? I think immediately in terms of the orchestra.

Crawford: So it's an economy in a way?

Sheinfeld: Yes, that's the way I think: if I'm writing for orchestra, I think for orchestra and that's it. And I think of the instrument. When I wrote for harp, I'd think of the harp, when I'm writing for string quartet I don't just write abstract notes down and then turn them into a work for four string instruments, I think immediately of the four instruments.

And now that I'm undertaking this work--for instance, one of the things I'm going to use quite a bit and I asked Ward Spangler, the percussionist, about that, and he told me that in fact he has those instruments called rototoms. They're sort of related to tom-tom's but they have pitch and you can alter the pitch and they extend the pitch of percussion instruments much higher than the tympani, itself, goes.

So in starting this piece, the first thing that I do is I immediately have a passage for the rototoms all alone, before any other instruments enter in and they are playing a certain group of notes which in fact will be the main notes.

Caroline, you should remind me about the tea--

Crawford: May I remind you about the tea? [laughter] While we are on tea break, we should look at some of your photographs.

Traveling

Sheinfeld: These wonderful pictures were taken by my wife, Dorothy, in different places that we've seen--

Crawford: You've traveled a great deal!

Sheinfeld: We traveled a great deal. The first time I was sixty-seven years old.

Here is one I like of Hong Kong. In Hong Kong they don't have people who are totally homeless, who have to live out on the streets. Even though people were streaming in from China, escaping from China into Hong Kong, then, Hong Kong was getting a population that it could not support any more, but they built these apartments. Don't get the impression that these were luxury condominiums, but they were at least--there was at least a place for people. You could sleep. You had a place where you could go to the bathroom, you could take a shower, you could cook even though it was maybe just a two-burner or whatever, but there was something. And these were the apartments that they put up for people there.

This is Mexico. That's Guadalupe, the cathedral in Mexico. Yes, we went out of Mexico City to this and you know it's remarkable what those--what they'd done. They were at that time, maybe more civilized than their Spanish conquerors.

Crawford: Great mathematicians--and probably musicians.

Sheinfeld: The Aztec calendar is outstanding!

Crawford: Did you have a favorite place you returned to?

Sheinfeld: Italy, of course. After all, I had lived there. But I think our favorite city of all was London.

Crawford: What did you like to do in London?

Sheinfeld: Oh, the theater and concerts--I mean what does one do in London? So much theater! And there are five orchestras--oh, you can't make up your mind which orchestra concert you want to go to! London is a great city!

Crawford: Wasn't it Samuel Johnson who said, "Whoever is bored with London is bored with life."

Sheinfeld: Is bored with life! If you are tired of London, you are tired of life. But you know what else is wonderful about London? There are these places right off Fleet Street and the Strand, all of a sudden, you just go a short distance and you are out of all the bustle, you're in a quiet place, sort of a bit of a park or whatever and you can just sit and it's away from everything. Yes, London, I would say it's my favorite city.

Crawford: Did you have a favorite place to stay in London?

Sheinfeld: Not one place, but the last time we were in London we actually stayed in an apartment hotel, and it was very nice, we loved that. A whole apartment to ourselves, we could even cook if we wanted to. And it was so lovely--we were not far from getting to Chelsea on the one hand, on the other hand we'd walk. It was sort of a bit behind Harrod's. One day we were walking and we found this blue plaque: "In this house, Jane Austen lived with her brother"--for maybe about six months or something. I love her, so I enjoyed that.

Crawford: I've been to her house in Chawton and they don't advertise it; you see a small plaque that says, "Jane Austen lived and worked here."

Sheinfeld: I was sort of excited when Dorothy found that plaque that Jane Austen lived there, because she was a favorite of mine, and then the first time we were in London, we stayed in a hotel a block or two north of Oxford Street, a very busy district--and we had gone on a walk and we had gone to the famous Wallace Collection, all kinds of paintings and furniture and so on of different periods, and on the way back, Dorothy said, "Look, David!" And there was a plaque on a house, "In this house Hector Berlioz lived for two years." That was exciting to discover.

We found a place on the other side of the Arno in Florence where Dostoevsky had lived too. And when we were in Amsterdam, we were in the home of Rembrandt. I always find that interesting.

Crawford: I just read that Handel's home in London has been restored. Mayfair?

Sheinfeld: He lived in--yes, it's in what's called Mayfair. It's on Brooke Street. The very first time that we were in London I took Dorothy to that. Of course it wasn't the house, it was

the address. And also, the second time we were in London--we went to Ebury Street to the house that Mozart lived in with his father. There is now a white plaque, and it says, "In this house Mozart composed his first symphony when he was eight years old."

And I've always wondered, what took him so long!
 [laughter]

I have this vision of Mozart, who emerges from the womb of his mother. He is just being born and he looks startled, because he's in the act of composing, and all of a sudden, there's light, you know? [laughter]

Crawford: What a wonderful picture that is, I hope you will write that!
 [laughter] What instrumentation will you use?

Sheinfeld: Well, I don't know what kind of instrument Mozart was writing for at that time--but I can't explain Mozart. You know Haydn was in the habit of coming and visiting the house often. Mozart's father was one of the principal violinists at the time, and they used to play string quartets together. And by the way, the term Papa Haydn comes from young Mozart. Mozart used to refer to him as Papa Haydn.

One day Mozart played viola in their quartet--of course in Leopold Mozart's house you didn't fool around, you learned to play. So all of a sudden, at age four, there is this Minuet: now I'm not talking about a masterpiece. And the same with that first symphony--I'm not talking about a masterpiece, but you know, it's a respectable work. There were many composers living at that time, who could in their entire life do no better than that. But the remarkable thing is that it sounded like Mozart; he already had his personality.

The Use of Three Conductors in *Confrontations*: Thoughts about Charles Ives

Crawford: What would you say about personality in music? You've said that you're a shy person, and Michael Tilson Thomas said in his book that he thought shy composers--Brahms being a very shy, secretive person, for example--was ever so much more difficult to decipher than Mahler, who was a very ebullient, outgoing person. Is there something analogous in your music? You've said your music is difficult to listen to.

Sheinfeld: Well, I don't know if my music is actually difficult to listen to. When *E=MC²* was given, it got a standing ovation, so how difficult could it be. Sure, there were people who didn't come to grips with it. Peggy Dorfmann and Leslie Step, a very bright young person who wants to be a painter and is painting, came with another friend who absolutely couldn't make head or tails of my music. She thought it was much too dissonant. Leslie said to her, "That music will be played one hundred years from now." [laughter]

Crawford: Well, you were talking about *Confrontations*.

Sheinfeld: Oh, yes! I was telling you about *Confrontations*. That, as I said to you, was my first work for orchestra in which I tried my new ideas. And I very clearly and deliberately set off moments of very clear diatonic tonality against moments of atonality. In fact, that is one of the confrontations that occurs.

In those days, the Oakland Symphony concert was repeated. I know the piece was played at least a second time, I'm not sure if it was played a third time, but both audiences reacted exactly the same way. They laughed in the right places, where I meant them to laugh. There is a place where all of a sudden I have some brass players who sound like the Salvation Army-- [laughter]--yes, the Salvation Army.

Crawford: What were you saying?

Sheinfeld: Well, I was just setting off all kinds of things. And they laughed. It made it's point. And then one of the confrontations was having different tempi going on at the same time.

When I wrote this work my intention was to have it done by two conductors and to have a number of electric metronomes distributed on the stage with the sound silenced but the electric eye on. And I would leave enough bars rest for a player who was going to come in, in an independent tempo, and the player could set the electric metronome to his or her particular tempo, and all that player needed from conductor number one or two was the cue to start, and then play in an independent tempo. That was one of the things about my new composing, that I wanted to have different tempi going on. But Gary Samuel for some reason felt that that wouldn't work. And so finally they settled on three conductors, and three conductors did that work.

Crawford: At that Oakland performance?

Sheinfeld: Yes. Now, near the end of that piece, there is a moment I have practically every instrument playing in a different tempo and it is very atonal. And then there is a moment of silence. And I direct a violinist to stand up and go over to the piano and they start playing a very simple tune in the key of G minor, a very simple tune sort of sounding like a little encore salon piece of the nineteenth century. And that broke up the audience. Seiji Ozawa heard the tape of that piece and he liked it so much that he did it with the San Francisco Symphony two years later. He also did it with three conductors, and the San Francisco audience--it was done three times in San Francisco--they all reacted in the same way. They all laughed at that.

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Crawford: Was Charles Ives an influence?

Sheinfeld: I was influenced by Ives in one sense: that like myself, he was independent. I've always felt that I was independent, and that sort of gave me courage to be independent, and so on and so forth. But in those days, oddly enough, I really didn't know the Fourth Symphony in which he does some wonderful things. I'd never even heard that symphony at that time! And I didn't know that other great work of his called *Three Places in New England*. It's a wonderful piece, but I didn't even know those works at the time! The works that we played by Charles Ives were his first and second symphonies, so that's all I can tell you about that.

Crawford: Which of the performances did you prefer of *Confrontations*?

Sheinfeld: Oh, oh! Well, look, the San Francisco Symphony is just a better orchestra. There's no question, it was a better orchestra. But you know, Gary Samuel really understood twentieth-century music.

I told you Seiji liked it so much that he played it and it got the same reactions from the audience, and I remember that the person who at that time was the principal cellist of the San Francisco Symphony said when we were backstage before one of the performances of *Confrontations*, "People are always laughing at atonal music, but David Sheinfeld gets them to laugh when they play tonally."

Crawford: You woke them up.

Seiji Ozawa in San Francisco: 1970-1977; Time Warp (1972);
Memories of Yesterday and Tomorrow (1971); Dualities (1976)

Sheinfeld: Yes, and then Seiji liked it so much that he later commissioned me to write a work for the Symphony's sixtieth anniversary--and I wrote this piece called *Time Warp*. I had to write that too fast; I didn't like that work and I've sort of dismissed that, because it was not a good work. I can't work that fast.

Crawford: There wasn't enough time to write?

Sheinfeld: Well, one of the four people who were commissioned that year was George Ligeti, and Ligeti didn't turn his piece in until two years after it was supposed to have been done. But I felt that I had to complete my work at the time and have it ready in time. And the result is, although there are some very good things in that piece, as a whole it was not good. But I do not regret writing the piece because I was trying out my new ideas. And you know, when you are doing something that's absolutely new, mistakes are going to occur. That's just a natural part of it--that was a part of my learning process.

Crawford: Did you use electronic instrumentation in that one?

Sheinfeld: I used five instruments--I used an electric violin and electric guitar, and I also used electric flute and two others, I can't at the moment recall, but I actually used five electric instruments, where the flute sometimes plays as a regular flute and then plays electric flute.

Before then already, I had been commissioned by the Francesco Trio, with David Abel, Bonnie Hampton, and Nathan Schwartz. And I wrote a piece which I called *Memories of Yesterday and Tomorrow*, and that was actually a quite successful piece. And I also carried out in that piece my new ideas of setting off very clearly tonal ideas against atonal ideas and all three players used additional instruments. The violin at times also was asked to be an electric violin and the cello at times was an electric cello and the piano--the pianist had an additional piano which was sort of muted.

Crawford: An electronic keyboard?

Sheinfeld: No, a regular piano, but I had it muted by covering it with a kind of medical tape or something covering certain notes which made the piano sound a bit muted. All the pianist did was swing around on the bench and there was the other piano. So it was written for three players but six instruments. And that

work was, as a matter of fact, played several times. It was done, first of all by the Francesco Trio, and the Contemporary Music Players did it some years ago and that was also very successful.

People came to tell me how much they felt it was very witty and how much they had enjoyed it. And it was interesting that two people made the same remark. There was a young Japanese--I don't know young--but anyway, a Japanese-American composer by the name of Paul Chihara who lived mainly in Los Angeles and they were doing a work of his on that program also and he was quite excited about my work. He came over to me and he said, "Mr. Sheinfeld, you wrote the youngest music on this program."

Crawford: Oh, that's a wonderful tribute.

Sheinfeld: And then! After, at the end of the program, Marta LeRoux came over to me--now, she had no idea of what Chihara had said--and she said, "David, you wrote the youngest music on this program!" She made exactly the same statement.

Crawford: Did she play your music?

Sheinfeld: No. She was originally to be the pianist in that trio for the Contemporary Players but she sort of got frightened by it. She felt it was difficult--you know, in one sense, those three players should really have had a conductor because I send them all off in different tempi at certain times. And in order to get that properly done, you really have got to have somebody to control that and to give a couple of beats to one person and then a couple of beats to another to really get that piece to sound the way that I wanted it.

Crawford: Was that piece done in the Los Angeles Monday Evening Concerts?

Sheinfeld: No. The Monday Evening Concerts did a work of mine that I wrote for harp, a later work, it was not this *Patterns*, it was a different work.

Crawford: Was that the *Dualities*?

Sheinfeld: *Dualities for Harp*. Marcella de Cray had played it at a concert of the San Francisco Chamber Music Society and then it was done in Los Angeles in the Monday Evening series--a young lady by the name of Mary Ann McNeill performed it. Like Marcella, she was one of the three big harp names in the country.

Crawford: Have you been pleased with the exposure of your work?

Sheinfeld: Well, I must say that I was as pleased as I could possibly be because I've never made any real attempts to get more exposure. Seiji Ozawa once said that to my son, Paul, when he played *Confrontations*--he liked it, and he said to my son, Paul, "Your dad is a great composer but he's crazy, you know, writing for three conductors. He'll never get it played." Paul told me about that later.

Seiji, himself, liked *Confrontations* so much that he wanted to do it on the European tour. I got this from a very, very reliable source afterwards because I wasn't supposed to know about it. But the directors of the symphony talked him out of that because they didn't want to go to the extra expense of taking along with them an electric guitarist, and all the equipment--

Crawford: Too costly to reproduce it. I remember talking to Ludwig Altman about you--he commissioned a piece for organ from you in 1973?

Sheinfeld: He commissioned me to write a work for organ which he liked so much that he played it a second time--both times in connection with the Goethe Institute. He played it at one recital and then he repeated it, I think two years later.

Crawford: *Elegaic Sonorities*? He said to me at the time, "I never knew such sounds could come from the organ."

Sheinfeld: You know, I had an interesting experience with Ludwig because that was the only piece, Caroline, that I actually helped myself composing with the instrument. I never use an instrument, but the organ I really didn't know and I wanted to discover the possibilities, so I got permission through Ludwig and I used to go maybe once a week to the Temple Emanu-El and work with the organ and see all kinds of possibilities.

Crawford: In terms of sound combinations?

Sheinfeld: The kinds of sounds that I wanted. I tried something for the pedals and it worked, and when Ludwig came to play, he said, "David, that can't be done!" So I showed him that you turned the foot, first the toe, then the heel. He said, "You taught me something!"

Crawford: Remarkable.

Sheinfeld: Did he tell you that?

Crawford: Yes, you taught him something about the organ--

Sheinfeld: Yes, I found that a very fascinating experience because I hadn't thought of myself of as a particular fan of the organ, as such, but I loved working on that piece and actually trying out all these different sounds. And so, as I've said, that is the one piece I wrote in my life in which I really worked with an instrument.

Crawford: I think you write ravishingly for harp--you really explore the full range of the instrument--

Sheinfeld: Yes, but that I just wrote that at my desk! I knew what all of these instruments sounded like. It seems to me, as I've mentioned that to you, that I just simply had a natural feeling for the orchestra. And after all, the very first piece that I wrote for orchestra was the piece on the basis of which Respighi accepted me as a student. And we're talking about a man who was a master of the orchestra, you know.

I told you Respighi would turn to a student and he'd be looking at a score that the student wrote for orchestra and he'd say, "This is what you wanted to do, didn't you? It won't work that way." But he never said that to me, you see.

I've told you Corti was sort of coaching me and especially in twentieth-century music, and one day he said, "David, I have something very nice to tell you. I was with Respighi this morning and I asked him how you were doing and Respighi said, 'Davide ha pieno di fantasia.' David is just full of fantasy." [laughter]

I remember one of the students had written a sonata for violin and piano. And since Respighi knew that I was a violinist--he asked me if I would bring my violin. And I brought my violin and since I was a fantastic sight-reader in the days when I had good eyesight, I played that sonata and the composer himself played the piano, and Respighi was so taken with it, he just commented right there and then how beautifully I had played and he was so astonished that I read it right at sight, just like that.

Crawford: There is a passage in *Threnody* that made me think of Respighi. There was something about the coloration.

Sheinfeld: I wasn't aware of that, but that could very well be. Why not? Yes, it could be, it could be. He was my teacher, and I had a great respect and really liked him. I won't say of him what I have said to you of Monteux. I said I loved Monteux. I didn't

have that kind of a close relationship with Respighi. But Respighi was very nice and very friendly and I was delighted with what Corti told me that morning. That's all.

The Composing Environment ##

Crawford: Would you say something about your composing environment?

Sheinfeld: Well, we have lived in this house for nearly fifty years, and I have a room upstairs where I do my composing that has always been my room. Dorothy made an environment that has been as good as possible for me to get my work done. I could go up to my room and shut everything out and just work and think about what I wanted to do, and my wife tried deliberately not to encroach.

When the children were young, Dorothy took them to Golden Gate Park and other places. For a while we had a car, but my eyes weren't good and I wasn't allowed to drive, so Dorothy would take the children to the zoo or on ferry trips or to the Gold County, all kinds of trips. She had learned to drive as an adult and was not completely comfortable driving the children. But they did take trips. I didn't go; I stayed home and worked.

Crawford: Did you always work at home?

Sheinfeld: No, I can compose anywhere, since I don't use an instrument--when we traveled we would be aboard ship, and I'd be sitting looking out or walking around the deck and I would all of a sudden get ideas. I always had music paper with me, and Dorothy would tell me she had passed me on deck and noticed that I was composing. [laughter] But somehow ideas came to me.

When I was with the Symphony we had Monday off--finally we got a contract with Sunday and Monday off--but on Mondays I worked all day. During orchestra breaks during the rest of the week I tried to be backstage, alone, and I would think about what was going on with the work I had in progress. I did quite a bit of composing during the week, but even during orchestra breaks I'd think about the piece, where I was and where I wanted to go, and when Monday came, I was ready to compose.

If I finished a piece during the Symphony season, I found it difficult to begin a new work. I waited until the summer.

But on Mondays I spent hours working--more than now--because I have a house. Yesterday I had it cleaned, as you probably can tell! [laughter]

Crawford: How did your wife cope with your composing at home?

Sheinfeld: Dorothy would sit in her chair by the window--she was a great reader--or she did stitchery in the living room, and she was perfectly happy and she knew that I appreciated that very much. I had fifty-three years of a happy marriage.

Crawford: Did you work late?

Sheinfeld: Yes, I had the habit of working quite late, at least until ten p.m. Then I would come and tell Dorothy and she would look at the clock and give me permission to quit--that was a kind of joke in the house. [laughter] After Dorothy passed away, and especially during the last six weeks when I was working on *E=MC²* I worked until half past midnight.

Thoughts about Structure in Music

[Interview 4: April 21, 1998] ##

Crawford: In our last session you told me about Respighi's saying you were full of fantasy. Could I ask how you relate that to structure in your music?

Sheinfeld: Let us remind ourselves of what Einstein said, that famous remark: he said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." I'm sure you know that saying of his. Now he did not say that imagination supersedes knowledge--I used to talk to my students about this in relation to their composing and I used to say that they should understand what a statement like that means. It means that one has to have a very great deal of knowledge because the more knowledge one has, the greater the fantasy can be. We keep pushing our horizons farther back, and farther back, and therefore we give freer and freer rein to our fantasy.

In terms of structure, I have long ago abandoned the conventional approach to musical form. Form and structure certainly are not necessarily exactly the same. Form has to be a part of structure and structure has to be a part of form. But there is a place where they depart. Forms are not necessarily permanent. I mean any individual form is not

necessarily permanent, no matter how much certain composers hold onto forms which have long ago passed out of relevance as far as what happens in our time.

There are composers who still use sonata form today in composing--there is nothing wrong with sonata form, it's a marvelous form, but sonata form really grew out of the need to set off tonic and dominant against each other. That was the real main idea--and it was inevitable that sonata form would emerge. Haydn certainly gave it a lot of shoves in that direction and he finally evolved it--and not only Haydn but also Mozart did this.

Sonata form simply meant that one had to come to the dominant of the key. And in coming to that dominant, they often retained the same thematic ideas so that there was a kind of monothematic sonata form at first. And this was such a lovely idea that actually Mozart, the later Mozart, returned to that now and then and did some marvelous things with that, for example, the slow movement of his marvelous E-flat major *Divertimento for String Trio*. It's one of the world's great pieces of music. The slow movement is monothematic all of a sudden. He goes to the dominant but he clearly holds on to the original theme.

The form began to develop with Haydn first and Mozart--first it was important to get to the dominant and one could hold on to the same material. But it didn't take Haydn long to realize that when he arrived at the dominant if he gave that new material--even though one could by analysis trace that material back to the first part--but nevertheless, if he gave that a new thematic shape, it would immediately expand the whole structure, the whole size of that sonata movement.

And so that is what he did, and this is a lesson that later composers ought to learn. They shouldn't just use that automatically; Haydn and Mozart used the form according to the basic ideas that they had. That is why later Mozart in that slow movement that I just mentioned to you returned to monothematic form.

Crawford: Would you say that of the fugue, too?

Sheinfeld: Oh, the fugue. The real fugue existed in the Baroque era. It belonged to the Baroque era and that was the end of it. And I can make a very important point then: there are places where Mozart uses the fugue, for example, in the G Major String Quartet which is the first of the six that he dedicated to Haydn, the last movement is fugal in nature.

But let's understand something: we have great artists here, we have men who were supreme geniuses. Mozart starts out here fugal, but he immediately goes off into homophonic writing which is the nature of the great period of diatonic tonality with Haydn and Mozart and so on and early Beethoven.

There are numbers of such cases and Mozart deliberately saves that for the Finale of the great C Major Symphony, the one we call the *Jupiter*--Mozart never heard of that of course. But anyway, he saves a great fugal section for the coda of that *Jupiter* Symphony and it becomes a five-part fugue. And in the succession, all the parts do the same thing, they go through all the different five parts of the fugue, it is simply fantastic.

Now Beethoven did that in numbers of cases. The C Major Quartet, Opus 59, Number 3--is the third of the Razumovsky Quartets--and that last movement starts out with a fugal subject in all the four voices and so on, but then immediately it goes off into homophonic treatment.

Mozart and Haydn used fugues in their religious works, but that was a kind of homage to the Baroque era.

Bach, Fugue, and Form

Crawford: What made it not the proper vehicle any more?

Sheinfeld: Oh, what made it not the proper vehicle was simply that the fugue is based on a great deal of contrapuntal motion, which is contrary to the period already starting in the time of Johann Sebastian Bach, himself. So that is why people including his own sons thought that he was old fashioned because he still stuck to the great, the marvelous contrapuntal devices, whereas they were simplifying things. Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach, who was Frederick the Great's composer--I've already mentioned that to you--well, he made that statement about his father. He said, "My father was a peruke stuffed with learning." [laughter]

Crawford: A peruke being a wig?

Sheinfeld: A wig. "My father was a peruke stuffed with learning." Carl Phillip Emanuel apparently did not realize that Bach had one of the greatest musical imaginations that ever existed. And it was that marvelous imagination that is what I'm coming to. It

was a fantastic musical imagination, but it was so far ahead of its time that people didn't realize that--there were a few cases of people who had a great admiration for Bach: Count Kaiserling, for example, who was an insomniac and was the employer of Goldberg, who had been a pupil of Bach.

Count Kaiserling had a great admiration for the music of Bach and that's why when he wanted to pull Goldberg in the middle of the night out of bed by the scruff of the neck and ask him to play for him, he decided to commission Bach to write a work for him to play [*Goldberg Variations*]. That was probably the greatest financial commission that Bach ever had in his life.

So that was for Count Kaiserling, and those variations are organized in a very special way. The idea was for poor Goldberg, now that he was up and he had to play for the Count, to make the Count at any moment feel relaxed and feel ready to go back to bed.

Bach organized the *Goldberg Variations* in a very special way: after the first introduction and two variations, there are twenty-seven variations, divided into nine different parts. Each one has a first movement which is a canon. The second movement is a variation which can be--and this is a deliberate structural choice on the part of Bach--which can be of any kind. The third movement is always a fast, brilliant finale.

The ground bass that Bach chose for the introductory movement was a movement that he had written for one of his wives, I believe his second wife, Anna Maria, and so he used that as the aria. But what he takes from that is the ground bass. You know that is the way Baroque variation was organized, on a ground bass, which makes it very different from the later variations that Haydn and Mozart and earlier Beethoven wrote, variations which are based on a special theme.

Baroque variation is not based on a theme. In fact, it does the opposite, it is based on the same figured bass and the idea is that the composer is to show how many different melodies--totally different musical moods could be created out of that ground bass.

Now the use of the ground bass had one disadvantage. The disadvantage is that it's always that ground bass. You have to be in that key. This happens to be in the key of G, the *Goldberg Variations*, so it can also be in G Major or G minor, but that's it. And the destiny of Baroque music was that you arrived at the dominant. In other words, if you're in G--

whether G Major or G minor--you arrive at D, whether it's D Major or D minor. That's destiny, that's fate, it cannot change, that's it.

The sonata form as we have come to know it grew out of this idea of arriving at the dominant. And then in Baroque music there were repeat marks and you went back and repeated, but this was the moment when the performer could show his or her virtuosity because you did not repeat exactly. [laughter]

I've often had this mental picture in my mind that some Baroque composer could come back to life, let's say Bach or Handel to mention the two greatest--and they would hear the same thing twice. Of course we have learned a lot and we no longer do that, but through a whole period in my life when one didn't even know (and therefore, how could I know) that when you repeat, this is the opportunity to do something different; you simply repeated it. So if a Baroque composer could have come back to life and heard that, he'd be lying on the floor, roaring with laughter.

Crawford: Are you talking about ornamentation?

Sheinfeld: I am talking about ornamentation and in fact, even more. And I want to emphasize the two words "even more" because performers began to take so many liberties there that even when Bach, out of self-defense had already changed the chord, they were still ornamenting and improvising on the other chord. And Bach got so utterly sick of that kind of thing that he began to write music in which he said, "Every note is there and nothing is to be changed." And of course he didn't mean that nothing is to be changed, but he meant that in those repeats one would just add maybe a little *appoggiatura*, or a passing note.

And you know what is interesting is that it wasn't just Bach who experienced that, it was Couperin in Paris. There is a big difference between these two men--Bach was in his day just a provincial composer. Leipzig was not a main center of music and Bach did not have at his command great performers of any kind, therefore these performers, their imagination was limited and so on and so forth, and so [Bach] out of self-defense had begun to insist, "None of this, don't go off into all kinds of improvisations, and in fact, don't even ornament the ornaments," which is what, in a sense, they were doing.

Now Couperin arrived at the same conclusion although he was living in Paris which was one of the main musical centers at that time, and he had at his disposal great performers, but they were, as I just mentioned, ornamenting the ornaments.

After all, this was a way that a performer could show his great virtuosity, you know.

So therefore Couperin wrote the *Twenty-four Pieces for the Clavecin*--the harpsichord--and he wrote a preface and said, "In this work everything is written. Nothing is to be added to this." So he, also, out of self-defense did that.

Now I said to you that Bach had created a structure: he builds into the great *Goldberg Variations* a series of nine pieces which are divided into three movements which makes twenty-seven movements--twenty-seven miniature movements, each one of which starts with a canon. And they go up progressively: the first canon is on the unison, canon number two is on the second, canon number nine is on the ninth, and so on, in between.

After each canon, the second movement is a piece of any kind of musical nature, whatsoever, and that was a part of the structure which I will tell you in just a moment. And the third movement had to be a brilliant virtuoso finale sometimes calling for just one manual on the harpsichord, sometimes calling for the two manuals which were registered differently, so you could actually hear that. When Bach, for instance, writes for the left hand to do the crossing over while the right hand stays--on the harpsichord you hear that, because the registration remains the same.

So the *Goldberg Variations*, number one, you have three miniature movements; Goldberg played them for the Count, that was the end of that. Now if the Count wanted to hear more, then you started the next series of three movements, but at any point the Count might say, "Goldberg, I'm relaxed"--okay, fine. But nevertheless, Bach did want the Count to know what he had, so he also divides the work so that it can be played in two parts. And the place where you can divide that work is of course in the second movement because that second movement can be a work of any kind whatsoever. So he ends the first part with a canon and then he starts the second movement--as I said, it can be anything--so he starts with what he calls a French overture.

So when you divide the work into two parts--now, Caroline, I'm speaking from memory, so I'm not sure at how many canons, whether this was the fifth--because one canon is a canon by an inversion of the fourth and another canon by inversion of the fifth. A canon by inversion is different from just a regular canon in the sense that it does everything that the initiating part does, but it does it by inversion, by the

opposite. If you go up a second, the inversion goes down a second. If you make a skip of a major third up, the inversion will do a skip of a major third down. And this is the way the fourth and fifth canons work--so it's after the fifth canon that Bach--that we can say that the first half of the work is over.

Solving Problems with Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart; Levels of Structure in Music and Atonality

Crawford: I guess you studied with Bach, didn't you? I see what you mean when people say to you, "With whom did you study?" You often say, "Oh, I had Beethoven, Bach and Mozart!"

Sheinfeld: I had three great teachers! [laughter]

Crawford: When you look at their music are you trying to figure out how they resolved the problems that they were looking at within the form that they had to work in?

Sheinfeld: Of course I did. That's the way I learned, I'm self-taught in that respect. And that's the way I learned. For instance, Bach comes to the very edge of tonality--if he makes one further step, he goes over the edge.

I used to play a little game with my advanced students, although this actually could apply equally to Mozart and Beethoven, but I really did have Bach in mind. I'd play a little game and tell them, "If we could bring one of the great composers of the past back to life, and he would suddenly hear atonality, which composer would most quickly come to terms with it?"

Crawford: That's interesting--where do you see that in Bach?

Sheinfeld: Oh, there are numbers of places where the subjects are practically leading him into different areas.

Crawford: When you say atonality, what you mean is no key system.

Sheinfeld: No key system, but you know that Beethoven and Mozart do that. I pointed out to string quartet players, there is Beethoven's Opus 18, Number 6, the finale, for instance.

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Sheinfeld: He wants to create a feeling of complete mystery--we don't know what key we're in. We're going to be in B-flat and we will arrive there, but we're on this journey, now, we're in some sort of a never-never-land. And he moved from one tritone to another now--the tritone divides the whole-tone scale: divides the scale exactly in half. The tritone is an augmented fourth or a diminished fifth, and that is nontonal.

That is why the great medieval composers and the great renaissance composers considered that a forbidden interval, which they called the *diabolus in musica*, "the devil in music." One had to absolutely avoid the tritone because it creates a nontonal feeling, you see? It does, it creates a nontonal feel.

In fact there is a marvelous piece by Johannes Ockeghem, who was Josquin des Pres' teacher. He was Dutch, he belonged to the Netherlands-Burgundian great school. Ockeghem probably was the pupil of Guillaume DuFay, who was one of the great composers of music and who was born exactly in 1400. And Guillaume DuFay already was arriving at new ideas about rhythm, about, for instance, the idea of doing a canon in which the parts that imitated the original could be either twice as fast, which we'd call diminution, or twice as slow, which we'd call augmentation.

Crawford: Very much what you do--simultaneity of tempos, of different tempos?

Sheinfeld: Absolutely. Absolutely, except that I do it in such a way that there can be no question of considering it as canon because I keep them separated at a distance because I don't want to have canon. If I want to have canon, you would hear it as such. But Guillaume DuFay, as I say, was a major genius. And Ockeghem was one of the great major geniuses of the middle of the fifteenth century.

Now Ockeghem was one of the absolute masters of the virtuoso canon, which did practically anything. In fact, when I was growing up and when very little was known about the great music of these masters, people made the criticism--which shows you what criticism is worth--but they made the criticism that these were just like Bach's works--it was the same thing that people thought of Bach, that they were just masterfully written examples of dry counterpoint, whereas they weren't dry at all--they were great musical pieces.

A pupil of mine had a motet of Ockeghem's which he brought to me and there is a wonderful moment there where the

text tells about the sins of the world--*peccati mundi*--and now, what greater sin could a composer commit than to use the tritone? So at that moment, Ockeghem uses the tritone--to "the sins of the world," but it's also covered up so beautifully that you don't even hear it.

Crawford: [laughter] It's kind of a pun, isn't it?

Sheinfeld: Yes--there are things that intervene in the middle in other voices before that--but actually he goes in one particular voice directly to the tritone. People did things like that. I mean, here was a composer who actually went against the most serious rule in music, and so on and so forth.

Now let's come back to Bach and form and structure in my music. I wanted to point out that these forms do not last forever, that the Baroque form, the great fugue, was a marvelous way in which the composer could show different contrapuntal ideas but when we get to what we call the classic period of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and so on, that was no longer necessarily the case.

We have talked about Beethoven's *Great Fugue, Die Grosse Fugue*, and what makes that a really great work is that it precisely does not emulate Baroque fugue. It absolutely doesn't.

He starts out with a certain fugal idea, a certain thematic idea [sings a solemn theme] that's going to go through the entire work. [tapping on the table with emphasis] And so, yes, that is going to be a fugue. All of this is introductory --when he actually starts the main movement, it's a double fugue.

The marvelous thing is that the pulsation is totally different. Where we start [sings beginning of slow theme] is a downbeat--and so now you can ask me, is this where I get my idea about QDB--you know, "quasi-downbeat."

Well, you know, Caroline, I have to say something to you --I got a lot of these ideas on my own. But by now I had learned a special way of looking at the music of these great composers. I can see many levels of structure in a piece, just levels of structure. In fact, when I finally saw that one day, I remember even saying to myself, "David, what took you so long?"

I finally discovered that there are all these inner levels the way we have inner levels of structure in a great

play like *Hamlet*, for instance, or *Macbeth*, in which there were ideas, and the levels which allow so many different ways of interpreting them--well, these levels exist and they exist in music.

Bach writes great fugues in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*--I have taken pupils of mine through numbers of them, that's not the important thing--he writes a fugue because he's writing a fugue, but he's doing different things.

There is one fugue, the F-sharp minor, which absolutely is based on rhythm. The real meaning of that, the real inner structure, is rhythm. And another fugue is based on turning the tonic and dominant around and suddenly making the dominant what the tonic should have been. And that's the second fugue in C minor--right away.

And there is the eighth fugue which is sometimes shown as in D-sharp or sometimes E-flat--Bach, himself, repeated that and showed both keys because he wanted to show that he is simply going through all of the twelve semi-tones, you know. The real meaning of that fugue is that he combines rhythms, different rhythms, and also inversion; we'll go through a whole statement and then we stop and in that statement we have done different rhythmic things. And now we do the same thing by inversion: we go through the same kind rhythmic of things and then Bach suddenly has a cadence which is in the original form and a cadence which is in the inversion.

And then he first goes off now into additional rhythmic things. And in the very last fugue Bach shows us something that is no accident: he writes a subject which uses up all of the twelve notes. Who was that guy, Schoenberg, you know?
[laughter]

So he uses up all of the twelve notes in that fugue. And by the way, Schoenberg took great pleasure in pointing out that when Mozart starts the development section of the last movement of his marvelous G minor Symphony, that he goes through eleven of the twelve tones. And by the way, that is deliberate. Mozart is embarking on one of the most complex and fabulous journeys into chromatic development there--that has ever been done in music up to that point. He has used up eleven of the twelve notes and he does that without letting any harmonies get in the way and then he goes off.

Crawford: So Schoenberg might have gotten the twelve-tone row from this music?

Sheinfeld: No, I am not implying that. But I am saying that Schoenberg took pleasure in that because after all when he was accused, you know, of writing music in the twelve-tone row, he could say "Look, Mozart did that."

Now I started to tell you about Beethoven in the Opus 18, Number 6. In that last movement he uses the tritone and he goes off and he uses chords--since the tritone has no tonality, he uses diminished seventh chords. An isolated diminished seventh chord, by the way, is a nontonal chord. What makes it tonal is that it is used in a given context where it suddenly is a variation of the dominant. So, in fact, we say of the diminished seventh chord that it's like a dominant minor ninth with the root missing--with the dominant missing, that's all, that's what a diminished seventh chord is.

But take a diminished seventh chord--there are only three different sounding diminished seven chords in all of the twelve different keys, and Beethoven moved from one to the other at this marvelous moment in *La Malinconia* [op. 18, no. 6] so we absolutely don't know what key we are in. In other words what I am saying is that Beethoven was perfectly aware of the idea of not having tonality at all. They just didn't have a name for it, at that time. They probably wouldn't say, "Look, at this moment this is atonal."

Now in the *Great Fugue*, what really makes that a great work--in fact it's the greatest fugue after the time of Bach--is the fact that Beethoven does not try to write a Baroque fugue. He is writing a homophonic piece in which he uses a fugue and he starts out with a double fugue, as I pointed out to you, and he goes off there. But the real meaning--and I can't understand why people don't realize that! It's there! The real meaning of that fugue is rhythm. Beethoven was a rhythmic genius and what he does is set off in the double fugue two different layers of downbeats.

This is written for string quartet, you know--and in the four voices of the string quartet these two voices hardly ever come together in exactly the same rhythmic situation--now all of a sudden, he brings in triplets which are faster and then he brings in sixteenth notes which are still faster. He is obviously building a sort of acceleration in the music and then he comes to a recapitulation.

Now there are no recapitulations in Baroque music. There is one recapitulation that occurs but that is precisely because of what Bach was doing and that was that C-minor Fugue that I mentioned to you before: the second fugue of the *Well-tempered*,

but Bach didn't think of it as recapitulation. But Beethoven makes a recapitulation, he has gotten faster and faster and then he comes back to the beginning of the double fugue and now everything is so much faster that there isn't room to put the pauses: [sings separated even tones]. There isn't room for that, so now it has to go much faster.

So that is the way he structures that. Now, we can say that that is a three-movement work, a homophonic idea. It is a working fugue because when he comes to what is the slow movement and that is very much homophonic kind of music underneath it it does have the subject, the line going, but that's about it.

Then we come to the Finale and in the Finale he does use a fugal idea right away, but all of a sudden he goes to a regular nineteenth-century thematic idea. So this is what makes that such a powerful work because he puts together homophonic ideas and the fugal ideas. But basically it is an absolute great masterpiece of rhythmic thinking and that's the main idea. That's one of the things I meant when I said that these great masterpieces have these inner layers of structure and so on.

VII COMPOSING: THE 1980S AND 1990S

The First Symphony: *Polarities* (1990) and Polyphony; Treating Time and Space: *E=MC²* (1997)

Sheinfeld: So now: now I think I can tell you what I do. This didn't happen immediately, but once I had arrived at my new ideas in '62 I had to explore the territory, I had to come to know that territory. And by the way, I made mistakes. I did some things that I would even be embarrassed for, but it had to happen, I had to go through that in order to really find my way. But I felt that polyphony had in one sense used itself up if we think of it only as a matter of consonance or dissonance, because with Schoenberg all of the twelve tones had been used and composers who followed Schoenberg even used all of the twelve notes simultaneously and one heard them all and that was it.

. There is a place in one of Lutoslawski's works, but I at the moment I'm not sure which one it is, where he actually uses chords made up of all the twelve tones, although he sort of divides them up into different triads, but they make all of the twelve notes.

I could be really seriously condemned for saying this and I want to make clear that it's my own subjective reaction, I'm not criticizing, ever, composers, men of real talent and integrity and so on--I want to convey that this is my own personal feeling. But after all, this is the way I compose, so I can only tell you that I have to express my own personal feelings and I felt that that had used itself up. I didn't agree that serialism was the ultimate end and had to be used all the time because for me that, in itself, becomes too predictable. You have to be, of course, a very sophisticated listener, but nevertheless, you know that when you use up the twelve notes, you have to use them again--

Crawford: It's a formula, isn't it? No note can be used twice before all of the tone row is used up?

Sheinfeld: That's right. Now, no matter how beautifully that is used, it is ultimately a kind of formula and I objected to that, so I use polyphony in a different way. Polyphony has gone on for years in my music--but especially in one work which I wrote which I called *Polarities*. It was my first symphony, and I wrote that with a grant from the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts]. I finished *Polarities* in November of '90.

And in this movement I decided that polyphony was the great contribution of our Western culture, so why not use it as a thing in itself, but not necessarily just as a matter of consonance or dissonance. I set up a series of five different polyphonic sections, each one different from the other, which right away created polarities.

In one I have the instruments generally playing trills or tremolos or repeated notes and so on and so forth, but I also have what I thought to myself at the time was a chanting Greek chorus creating a kind of interesting musical effect going on against it.

Another polarity was suddenly coming to a big unison. Everybody is in unison and then there are passages of atonality which follow that and then it goes back to unison and then there are passages of tonality. There are five such sections which follow each other, and one section is a snare drum polarity: the snare drum plays throughout and it doesn't just play, it moves to a smaller snare drum which has a sort of different effect and sometimes both snare drums are played at the same time and against this all kinds of different happenings are going on.

The polarity that I mentioned to you with trills and tremolos was the second--the first one starts out with kind of very rapid figures, a kind of ostinato figure--but not true ostinato, because they vary within themselves--going on in the strings and then later on moving to the woodwinds. And against this I set off various things, either tonal or atonal--sometimes, suddenly, in the midst of all this sounding a simple triad like a major or minor chord, but in that context, it's very different. And this is the way that I have used different kinds of harmonic thinking.

Crawford: Is there someone else who writes in this vein? It sounds a little bit like Varèse?

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Sheinfeld: Webern's Concerto for Nine Instruments is written in the twelve-tone technique and, in fact, in tone rows--and as a matter of fact Webern had a characteristic of subdividing his tone row into four sections of three different notes.

So this is a very much atonal work and yet there is a moment in that first movement which we call the C-sharp minor because the constituents of notes makes that. Now he, of course, didn't intend that, and he couldn't have cared less if it was pointed out to him, that it sounded like C-sharp. He did what he wanted to do, but it comes that way. After all, we have so many notes and they are bound at sometime or other to create certain kinds of feelings.

Crawford: How is your work organized?

Sheinfeld: My work is organized very much according to emotion.

Crawford: What does Kent Nagano mean when he says that it is highly composed or thoroughly composed?

Sheinfeld: Well, going back to Einstein, I not only treat time differently, but I treat space differently. For me, consonance or dissonance are no longer in themselves necessarily relevant. There can very well be and in fact will be moments when I take advantage of the possibility of different kinds of harmonic tensions--I did that in the slow movement of *E=MC²* where there's almost no polyphony at all, and then it suddenly comes. There are two places where it comes to a moment of very great dissonance and so on and so forth. So of course I use that but that to me is not the important thing.

It occurred to me, and this comes out of my feelings about Einstein--about a universe in which there is no fixed point, things are relative. It occurred to me that here was the opportunity since all the notes, all the twelve notes, have already been sounded together, there was an opportunity to use polyphony differently. And to me, polyphony means taking numbers of voices, each one of which can have its own personality, its own character, and putting them together, treating them differently. That's what I did in *E=MC²*. I use different happenings.

So that is the way I organize my music. Now these happenings can occur again, but not necessarily in the same context. And I am perfectly aware and I acknowledge here, although I am not doing it in imitation, but nevertheless I am

perfectly aware that this is the way Berg often structured his music. There are places in *Wozzeck* where a certain group of notes will all of a sudden appear in a totally different place --exactly that same group of notes will appear.

That was one way in which Berg structured his music, so I'm perfectly aware of that and of course acknowledge my debt to Berg in that sense. But it comes out of what I want to do in terms of having different parts which are relative to each other. And by the way, I'm going to go even farther in this new piece which I'm just getting underway now--with that idea of different parts and sometimes the polyphony differs very much.

It couldn't be as I did in that movement that I called *Microcosm* in *E=MC²*. A great deal of time there is hardly any polyphony at all. There are just two little voices that seem to sort of come against each other in different ways and then it builds to moments in which there is quite a bit of polyphony. Well, I'm going even farther now. It seems to me that that opens up all kinds of marvelous possibilities to use polyphony, where in one sense thinking of them as to whether they are consonant or dissonant is almost--I stress the word "almost"--irrelevant.

I already said to you just a few moments ago that there are times where I certainly deliberately have taken advantage of the fact that at a given moment I can be very consonantal and at another moment I can be very dissonantal and I'm intending to do that even more in this new piece. But those are moments. My general feeling is to treat these different parts as though they belong to different dimensions of time and space.

Crawford: It's like the theory of relativity then, you're actually translating these into music?

Sheinfeld: In that sense, I am. And I did that and by the way, it worked. And it worked beautifully in *E=MC²*, and I am prepared now to take it even farther. So that's the way I do my structure, I no longer write in "sonata form." If I feel it relevant at a given moment, I wouldn't hesitate to use that, but, to me, that is no longer the case.

As I said, sonata form is about tonic and dominant and when you no longer can do that, you're in trouble. That's why Beethoven gave all other composers following after him so much trouble. And all of a sudden we seem to arrive at a period in

the nineteenth century when a man of great talent, a genius like Chopin, simply was hampered by it.

Dvorák was certainly hampered: Dvorák, when he writes his own little *Slavonic Dances*, when he allows himself to write in his own feelings it is so beautiful, but when he tries to use sonata form he can at times get into trouble and I can hear that.

Crawford: Where do you hear that?

Sheinfeld: I hear that when he gets off self-consciously into that necessary development section, sometimes. And it gets in the man's way. It got in Tchaikovsky's way, except that Tchaikovsky, when he wrote for orchestra he was a complete genius, and sometimes he just didn't allow that to happen. Dvorák sometimes dutifully goes through that development section and you can almost feel that sigh of relief when he's ready to leave it.

Schubert died at a too young age; when he died he was only thirty-one, and he had just come into a remarkable period of music. He had created that fantastic two movements of the *Unfinished Symphony*. And I'm absolutely convinced that the reason that he did not finish it is because he, himself, he didn't know what he had wrought, so to speak, and he just didn't know how to go ahead.

There are some bars of a *Scherzo* movement that he had started to write and he knows that it doesn't work, and it really doesn't. Because he had created a new kind of music which Mahler finally followed successfully. And that new kind of music is a music in which dramatic form is what gives the real meaning to the music, not necessarily tonic and dominant but a new kind of feeling of drama.

That is what makes those two movements so absolutely marvelous--and Schubert did inject some of that in later works, but in his great C Major Symphony he again returns to a somewhat more traditional way of thinking about music. He had already come to realize that the Romantic era means something else. It means, as I say, making the form out of drama.

I know that a lot of people have tried to find sonata movements in certain works of Mahler where he really did not intend that. Because what makes Mahler work is those tremendous contrasts, even violent contrasts that suddenly occur, that's the real basis of form and structure in Mahler. If you really want to understand what Mahler is about, that's

what he is about: those violent contrasts, which can be contrasts of sonority--of tempo, of music, itself. The contrasts are so very different from each other: the emotion, and so on, and so forth--that's the real meaning of Mahler. But he finally came to understand that and that is what makes him a great composer.

Crawford: So--new ideas of structure.

Sheinfeld: I absolutely do not follow the old forms because I feel they're not relevant--I even have the audacity and I know that it's audacity, but I have confidence in myself to create entirely different ideas of structure and form. I feel that that is the responsibility--if I'm a creative person, I should create, I shouldn't just regurgitate other men's dreams, or every great man who lived in former times.

There is no question that there is a line that goes on, that continues on, and we're all influenced by each other. No matter what kind of music, no matter how different I may make my music, it's based on who I am as a person. And I grew up in the music of our Western culture and I don't want to tear that out of myself, but in any case, if I did want to, I cannot tear that out, it's too much a part of everything that I am.

I grew up listening to that music, listening to the marvelous music--when Beethoven symphonies were still really fresh--how much I still do love them, but especially then how much I loved them. How much I loved Mozart. How thrilled I was to hear certain works of Brahms! And playing the music of Bach. And Mozart and Beethoven when I had that quartet that I told you about where all of a sudden a whole tremendous repertoire--there are eighty-five string quartets of Haydn alone and so on--all of that repertoire opened up to us and it was exciting.

Crawford: Do you listen to a lot of new music?

Dorothy Sheinfeld's Illness and Death

Sheinfeld: I certainly would be happy to, but I don't have the time. When I was working on *E=MC²*, I lost so much time at that time. Actually, I was working on *Dear Theo*, but I already knew that I was going to compose *E=MC²*. And when my wife died, it was a tremendous, a tremendously difficult time for me. I'm sorry to

keep going back to that, but that explains certain things. I lost a lot of time.

So when I finally got around to working on $E=MC^2$, I really had to spend practically all the time that I had on that and I didn't have time to listen--I only very, very seldom went to concerts.

Crawford: Was hers a long illness?

Sheinfeld: I can tell you exactly. The Kronos String Quartet performed my Second String Quartet at Kimball's East on January 13, 14, and 15, in 1995, and my wife didn't say anything to me, but on the thirteenth, she had got a phone call from her doctor who told her that she had seen something that she didn't like, and she told Dorothy that she had cancer.

Dorothy didn't say a word to me because she didn't want to upset me during these performances; she felt that would interfere--which it certainly would have, but I would have regarded her as infinitely more important. But anyway, she didn't say a word to me. And we had the three performances: the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth of January, and it was in the middle of the next week that she came upstairs--I was sitting at my desk working--and she told me that she had cancer.

That was in January and she passed away on the twenty-first of May of that year. At first she was puzzled because she didn't even feel anything. She didn't feel anything at all. She was a very courageous person, she was going to submit to radiation--not chemotherapy, radiation--and she was just going to do her best to try to fight it off.

The doctors told us--we had already planned to go on a one-week cruise--and they said, "Go ahead and enjoy yourselves," and so on, and we did. And she certainly kept up a very cheerful exterior. I am sure that there were times there when she was all alone when she must have been very, very sad.

I remember a moment right here in this house when Paul Yarbrough, the violist of the Alexander Quartet, and his wife, Pien, and their two little children were visiting us one afternoon, just for a bit of time, and they already knew that Dorothy had cancer and there was a moment when Pien just sort of threw her arms around Dorothy and hugged her and Dorothy broke down. So, once--so. I mean, sure, she was aware of that. But it was only afterwards that all of a sudden it

really hit her very much and she had terrible pain and so on. It lasted from the middle of January to May the twenty-first--

Crawford: That took a lot of care on your part.

Sheinfeld: Yes. And at the end, she was right at home. We had her of course in the hospital, and I wasn't even aware that it was terminal. I don't know why they didn't want to tell me. Her doctors, her regular doctor, and the people who were specialists in cancer maybe make a practice of that, but they didn't say a word.

Crawford: Maybe they don't really know until the last.

Sheinfeld: Maybe. I was not aware that it was terminal. I was hoping that somehow that she would overcome it. But one day suddenly she had been in terrible, terrible pain and her own doctor, Dr. Jane Hammersly--she's a very good doctor--was not available, but there was a man who was taking her patients that day and I told him that she was in terrible pain and he said to me, "You can increase the dosage, it's terminal anyway." And that was a shock. That was the first time I heard that. So the next day I called Jane Hammersly, and she said, "Yes, it is, it's terminal." But they hadn't said anything to me before.

I still remember that terrible shock. It would have made it a little bit easier to bear if I was aware of that, instead of suddenly having someone tell me that when I was still hopeful that she could somehow arrest it, as sometimes happens, that's all. But she was already back home, now, from the hospital, she was right in this room. We had a regular hospital bed and I had round-the-clock nursing care for her. And I--maybe I didn't want to accept it, but certainly I somehow didn't think that it was terminal.

Crawford: We always hope.

Sheinfeld: Yes, but when that doctor said that, that was it. In any case, we were deeply attached to each other so her passing was a tremendously difficult time in my life. And I lost a lot of time. I did try to keep composing because when I did sit down at my desk, and once I began concentrating, I forgot about everything else. Those were the moments when I could sort of get away from everything. But still, it was, as I say, very difficult. Therefore, I had to miss a lot of concerts of new music and so on that I would normally have gone to.

The First and Second String Quartets (1978, 1994) and the Kronos Quartet

Crawford: Perhaps we should talk here about the Kronos Quartet, your two quartets and the Fromm commission of 1994 and what that represented to you.

Sheinfeld: Oh, that was my Second String Quartet.

Crawford: Do you still consider that your greatest work?

Sheinfeld: Well, I don't know if it any longer is my greatest work, but at the time when I was writing it I was absolutely convinced that it was the best thing that I had done.

The First String Quartet Fromm had commissioned for the Chamber Music Society in 1978. There was an award called the Fromm Award and I was given that award for that string quartet.

In that work there is an Elegy. It's in three movements and there is an Elegy which for me was the catalyst for everything else. When I wrote that Elegy I was, in a sense, thinking of victims of the holocaust and everything, but I didn't say anything because I felt how could I have the impudence to think that I could write a work about something like that, so I just kept it to myself. But later I finally did admit that.

In any case, that's what it was and it represents--I used the polyphony on two different levels. There is the level of reality and there is a level which is generally almost always a bit softer, which represents the memories and the echoings of the dead. That is what goes on in that elegy and that causes everything else to happen. The first movement is a kind of agitated introduction into that. And the last movement is a kind of nightmarish *Scherzo Finale*. It was a very successful work, but that isn't the one that I thought was the best thing that I had done.

Crawford: You must remember the Kronos early on. What were they like then, in the seventies?

Sheinfeld: Well, of course they were a lot younger and they had a husband and wife who played second violin and cello and I even met them at that time but they left and then David Harrington and Hank Dutt auditioned--the two people who are now the regulars and were already there when they did my First String Quartet. And they're all very nice people, they're all very much devoted to

new music. They get along very--which is important--they get along very well together. They have to travel a lot--so does the Alexander--they get along beautifully together, the four people. Because they have to be in each other's company a great deal.

So that was the form, that was what really caused the form of my First String Quartet. I was already doing all the things that I mentioned: I was having different parts going on in different tempi and different feelings of downbeat and so on. And there is a very interesting moment which occurs in the last movement where they have been atonal, but suddenly I start the second violin in a kind of ostinato figure in the key of D minor--and the cello and viola are sort of making comments on that. And the first violin enters--

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Sheinfeld: [piano is played--Bach's *Goldberg Variations*] Are you able to play on that instrument?

Crawford: There are a lot of notes out.

Sheinfeld: I remember some instances when this piano was in tune--and that goes back years ago--when sometimes I would want to try a very complex passage I had been working on at my desk and so on, and I'd come downstairs and it wasn't what I wanted it to be and then I'd go upstairs and start thinking again and I'd realize, "No, I'm sticking with what I've done."

Crawford: It was too limited for your purposes?

Sheinfeld: Yes. And I realize that, in fact, the piano wasn't helping me any. In fact, it was hindering me. And so I just absolutely do not use an instrument and that is that. There's actually still a bit of tea left, Caroline, if you should want some--

I was telling you then about the structure of that First String Quartet. There is a moment when I had the first violin just plucking out a very simple tune, and I instruct him, I say, "This must sound very mechanical--no crescendi, no diminuendi, no vibrato of any kind." And the tune goes [sings short even "bup-bup-bup-bup," and so on] and you hear the cello and viola commenting on the second violin. But now that they've heard this tune, they start commenting on the first violin also. And then there is a pause and then all of a sudden, the first violin resumes and does the second part--in other words, that's the tune.

There is a place where the viola suddenly does something in a very overly sentimental way [sings] which is based on [sings the first violin tune] of course, you see? And so on, so I mention that to you because when the Alexander Quartet did my string quartet in Bath, England, I was lecturing at the college where we were doing it--at a university, which is just outside of Bath, itself.

There were all these young people there and there were three of us, George Crumb, a composer by the name of Martin Bresnik, who is now at Yale, and myself. We were there and our three quartets were going to be on that program--they were doing Crumb's *Dark Angels*.

In any case, we all spoke about our work and on this one particular occasion, it was an afternoon before the concert and there were these young people present and we were all talking about our works and I was explaining to the young people about my having different kinds of music, tonal and atonal, going on and different kinds of speeds and so on and so forth. And I had the Alexander Quartet illustrate that passage.

And you know the young people broke into spontaneous applause, they just loved it, so I knew that I was on the right track and I was just going ahead with that. But in the case of the Second String Quartet, that is the one where I thought at the time that I was composing it that it was the best work that I had done up to that time. And I mentioned it to no other person whatsoever, but I would tell my wife about that and I would tell her I'm absolutely convinced, and so it was so interesting that when the Kronos actually performed it, that my friend Charles Boone said to me afterwards, "David, this is the best thing that you've ever done!" It was just interesting because I hadn't said anything to Charles that I felt that it was the best thing I had done.

Crawford: Why would he say that to you, do you think?

Sheinfeld: Just that I had more control, more mastery over all of those ideas that I have been discussing with you. We can talk about a really great artist, for instance, Bach: the reason I mention Bach is that there were so few people who realized what a really great genius, not just your everyday genius, but a really great genius Bach was, and yet he had so little recognition. Even Telemann, who certainly was no second-rate composer by any means, had a far greater recognition.

Crawford: Is it possible that Bach could have gone into oblivion without Mendelssohn bringing his music back?

Sheinfeld: No, I don't think so, Caroline, because you see, certain things have happened. In our century, people have gotten a bit tired of hearing the same works over and over again, but they, on the other hand, did not want to come to grips with really serious attempts at twentieth-century music, so out of a kind of desperation, they were looking back into earlier music to find something. And they would undoubtedly have discovered Bach. That was inevitable.

Bach never was totally out of the consciousness of composers. Violinists were playing his sonatas and suites for unaccompanied violin, maybe not very much but they did play those. Beethoven, after all, didn't really know Bach all that well. He knew Handel much better and Beethoven felt that Handel had been the greatest composer who had ever lived and so on. But nevertheless, he was looking at--I think it was *The Art of the Fugue* or maybe it was the *Well-Tempered [Clavier]*, I'm not sure--but, he said, "Your name should be OCEAN!--" Do you know what word Bach means in German?

Crawford: River, spring.

Sheinfeld: It means the brook, his name would have been John Sebastian Brook in English. Anyway, Beethoven said, "Bach, your name shouldn't have been brook, it should have been ocean."

I think I told you about the Baron von Swieten, who was a great admirer of Bach's and who had collected so many of Bach's works? He was a fellow mason of Mozart and he brought Mozart back to his house on one occasion.

Mozart sat at a table and the Baron brought out some scores of Bach and left Mozart alone and for a while Mozart was looking at these scores. And then the Baron came back and when Mozart was aware that the baron had returned, he turned to him and said, "Bring me everything you have by this man." I am sort of thrilled by the story--that sort of excites me, because it took one to know one, and Mozart realized what a great genius Bach was.

By the way, that had a tremendous effect on Mozart because the works that he wrote afterwards have a lot more polyphonic activity in them than before--even that marvelous coda that I mentioned to you before of the *Jupiter* Symphony in which he has a five-voice fugue going on, all of that came after he had already come in contact with this great master.

There is another story about Mozart in relation to Bach: Mozart at some point was in Leipzig and an organist who had

been one of the successors of Bach in that job there took Mozart back with him to the church to hear some of Bach's works which the chorus sang. Mozart was sitting there and Mozart got excited and said, "This is someone from whom one can learn."

So there were moments like that, and Bach was never totally forgotten. But Handel was much better known and the reason is that Bach was, as I said to you before, just a provincial composer. He lived in this--who cared about Leipzig? It was just some town somewhere off in the outskirts, somewhat like the New Yorker's approach to people who live west of the Hudson.

Crawford: Is it true that travelers came and left music for Bach's library, so that he had all of Couperin's music, for instance, and he had a healthy appreciation for French composers of his time?

Sheinfeld: But you know, Caroline, they knew about Bach: Bach had a great reputation which ultimately did reach all musical circles, but his reputation was as possibly the greatest keyboard performer of his day. In fact he was criticized for playing too fast, because he had so much control over the keyboard, and he was recognized as having a phenomenal contrapuntal technique. I think I've said that?

Crawford: Yes, you did. Well, tell me what the performance history of the two string quartets was?

Sheinfeld: The Kronos played the First String Quartet on several occasions.

Crawford: Was it recorded?

Sheinfeld: No, they just made tapes, they're not allowed to record. They would have recorded my second string quartet. The American Academy of Arts and Letters was ready to sponsor a CRI recording of both of my string quartets done by the Kronos, and I even received a letter from the president of CRI that he was looking forward to doing that, but then according to the contract that the Kronos has, they couldn't record for anyone except that company with which they record.

And that company in turn was not ready to encourage big works. They're more likely to encourage those short pieces that the Kronos has done, you know, those little pieces. So it was just about two years ago that David Harrington told me reluctantly that they would not be able to record the two works. They wouldn't be able to record either of them at all.

Then the Alexander took it over--the Kronos were very nice and turned the music over to them and allowed them to play the works. They have not yet played the Second String Quartet, but they're going to get around to it. They like it very much --Sandy Wilson was very much taken with it--he was with me at the performance on January 10 this year when the Kronos again played it and they're looking forward to doing that and then to recording them. But so far there are no recordings.

Crawford: Who do they record with?

Sheinfeld: The Alexander don't have that kind of exclusive contract, and have recorded all of the Beethoven string quartets. I don't know what the company is, but they are obviously free to do that. In fact, Sandy Wilson at the time when they were possibly thinking of doing it under CRI, said that they might actually do it with the company for whom they play, so that's sort of hanging in the balance.

So the Alexander, this is definite on their part, actually want to play the Second String Quartet and then to record both of them. But that's in the future.

My Second String Quartet can be described structurally--roughly speaking and I emphasize the word, roughly--it can be described as having four movements. The third and fourth movement are actually intertwined, but they are still separate. The first movement and the last movement, the fourth, are basically atonal. The two inner movements, the second movement and the third movement have a lot of tonal things in them, so that is a broader way of thinking structurally.

Now, since that third and fourth movement are intertwined, they affect each other so at the end, there is--now this is a very loose description, because I don't have a coda in my piece, but I'll call it a kind of coda--and in that coda the fact that the third movement and the fourth movement (basically atonal) have been together and intertwined and interrupted each other, they have affected each other so in that last part there is a combination of both tonal and atonal things happening. That's the way the work ends, you see?

Performing History of the Quartets; *The Earth is a Sounding Board* (1978)

Crawford: Well, from there we might go on to *The Earth is a Sounding Board* (1978). Was that your first work for chorus?

Sheinfeld: Yes. Yes, and that was, by the way, a smash hit. I wanted to write this work to deal with different events--if the earth is the sounding board, then all of a sudden you hear sounds that come from anywhere on the planet.

There are moments when you hear something that sounds almost a bit Asiatic because at that moment, just at that moment, that's where the sound comes from. There's a moment when the chorus is using Russian--they sing in Russian, you hear the men singing "God have mercy." And there is a moment where all of a sudden we hear a string quartet playing as though they are in the middle of a concert and they are playing a work of the earlier classical period and it's very tonal. And then that disappears and something else happens and so on.

Some of these events recur which gives them a structural unity. At a later moment in the piece, we again hear this string quartet, but this time they are in the midst of a twentieth-century work and we hear that. We hear little moments of women's voices sort of sounding a bit Asiatic, and that comes back. And the central moment of the work is when I do something that's very ecumenical--I call for an alto voice to emerge right out of the chorus, because just that one moment the alto sings in a kind of blues style, but it's atonal. She sings, "My man has gone to war, my man has gone to war, I'll see my man no more, no more, no more." And it's very bluesey in style, but it is atonal.

Shortly after she starts that, a tenor voice sounding like a Jewish cantor comes in and sings in Hebrew, "Blessed be thou, O Lord--who has given us this day," and so on and so forth. And he sings, and then shortly after that, the remaining tenor voices sing, "Agnus Dei," all of this while that alto voice is going on, you see. And the bass voices invoke the dreaded Hindu goddess, Kali, and they sing that. She was a terrifying goddess and they invoke her name--"And Kaa-a-a-a-a-li" in a very trembly voice and by the way, that worked beautifully.

So that's the sort of central part, and later, since I am using the chorus, there are times when they just speak--they murmur and speak while the music is going on and I tell them to

say anything that they want, but I do add, "please no obscenities," because that would be just exactly what would be heard! [laughter]

Then I have a moment when the women's voices are singing against the men's voices, two very different things which you would expect from me--and that worked very well. That was a triumph.

Crawford: Where was that performed?

Sheinfeld: The Berkeley Symphony did that in '93 and it really was a big, big hit.

Crawford: You might want to talk about Kent Nagano a bit because he is such a promoter of your music, and very outspoken in saying you are a genius.

Sheinfeld: Well, he had obviously heard some of my things and he came to visit me one day here in this house and told me that he regarded me as one of the most important composers, and that was it. We talked about his doing something of mine and I told him about this work and he had the score and he told me that he wanted to do it, that is, *The Earth is a Sounding Board*.

So we went on from there and it was after that that he asked me to write a work for string quartet and orchestra. But then once day I suddenly saw how I could do it. That was the genesis of *E=MC²*. I told Kent I was now ready to do the work.

But he decided that he would first do *Polarities*, in May of '96, I guess, and he did *Polarities* at that time and then the following year, February of '97--that was my deadline for the new work--he did *E=MC²*. I already told you that the evening of the final rehearsal, Friday night, he asked me to write the work for percussion and orchestra.

Crawford: You did tell me. Was *The Earth is a Sounding Board* in a cantata form?

Sheinfeld: No. It's called a cantata, but only because I felt that I had to use voices because I was writing about the sounds of the planet. I wasn't worried about what it would be called--the form, as I say, is given by these unexpected things that happen.

It was a big success, and I've never had that happen before--I got a bouquet with flowers and then Kent said,

"David, turn around," and I turned around and there was another coming at me, and a third.

Crawford: That meant a lot to you?

Sheinfeld: Yes.

Crawford: When was your music performed by BBC? Was that when you were in Bath?

Sheinfeld: Yes, when I was in Bath I was interviewed by someone from BBC. I was told that this would be broadcast to the Soviet Union. And they told me that they had an audience of about 30 million listeners in the Soviet Union and the program would be broadcast there twice. The Alexander also played it (and I think I'm correct in this) they played it on BBC in London.

Composers Award (American Academy of Arts and Letters); *Dreams and Fantasies* (1981)

Sheinfeld: Dorothy and I were in New York in '93 because I was going to receive this award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a composer's award. And we went up to visit BMI, and visit Ralph Jackson who is in charge of the concert music division and he explained to me why for five years in succession I had been getting royalties for performances in London. Did you see this award?

Crawford: [reading] "David Sheinfeld is an incomparable master of the orchestra and of instrumental writing, generally. His compositions are full of big and striking and altogether original ideas compellingly and effectively realized. His works derive from a free-ranging and exuberant musical fantasy that is always under the control of a superb and masterful craftsman." From the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Well, let's talk about the 1981 Symphony commission which was performed by Edo de Waart; and that was *Dreams and Fantasies*.

Sheinfeld: Oh, that turned out to be *Dreams and Fantasies*, yes. And I think I already mentioned to you what caused that. I think I said to you that we were in Mexico City and during the very first night--why that should happen I couldn't say to you--but I had a dream and I heard a kind of music. It was so different from anything that I had ever heard, and when I woke out of

that, although I didn't remember the specific notes, I remembered the ideas in back of it and that was what caused me to write *Dreams and Fantasies*.

I actually had started working on *Dreams and Fantasies*, because music is my life, it isn't just something I do, it's my life, and whether I would be commissioned or not, I'm going to compose, so I started to write *Dreams and Fantasies*.

I believe, Caroline, that I mentioned to you that when I put things down on paper, everything's there down to the last instrument. If it's going to be played by the second bassoon or the third horn, it says third horn or second, it doesn't just say horn, it says third horn, or whatever.

Crawford: Yes, you've told me it's all thought out ahead. For instance, when I came in the door today you said, "I've been walking and I've been working on my newest piece and I've moved it forward."

Sheinfeld: That's right. Well, I had written about thirty-nine bars of the piece, and Charles Boone brought John Adams, who at that time was the composer-in-residence with the San Francisco Symphony, to the house.

John--there's a very bright mind there--and even though he, himself, doesn't agree with a lot of what is going on in twentieth-century music, he has a very open mind. So Charles Boone brought him to the house here and I showed him the score that I had composed of *The Earth is a Sounding Board* and left him alone with it. He sat in that room for a couple of hours and when he came out he said, "This is an incredible achievement." Those were the words that he used, and he said, "I'm going to talk to Edo de Waart about that." And so he did.

Edo de Waart said that he would like to see something of mine, something different, something maybe that I was working on, so I gave John Adams the first thirty-nine bars that I had done of *Dreams and Fantasies*, and de Waart looked it over and he said, "Oh, this man has to be commissioned." So he commissioned me and I went ahead--after that, from bar forty on it's a commissioned work! [laughter]

Crawford: That's a wonderful story. What would it be that John Adams wouldn't agree with, in your view?

Sheinfeld: Oh, he is--I hate to use this word--he is much more conservative in that sense. He doesn't accept a lot of more

atonal things that have been done and so on and so forth. You know his work.

He's a very bright person, and I only have complimentary things to say, but I think if John really was willing to accept some more advanced sounds, I think he would do even better. And there's no question that he is an excellent composer and so on. But he must have seen in that score of *The Earth is a Sounding Board* a lot of atonal writing that he probably, himself, wouldn't have agreed with, and realized that I knew what I was doing.

Crawford: When you're using electronic instruments, as well as acoustic--

Sheinfeld: I've told you about my ideas about electronic instruments, that Schoenberg has all these new ideas about music but there are no new instruments to do it. I wrote a whole paper which I submitted to the Ford Foundation and I was turned down on it, but I submitted a paper about the question: 'Are there any new instruments?' And I made a comment: the synthesizer obviously is not that instrument because it has already developed a whole series of cliches. It has not inspired composers, excepting a few.

Stockhausen wrote beautifully for the synthesizer, Berio, and so on, but it didn't really work. So my answer was yes, there are instruments--there are all the conventional instruments that we have to which electronic devices could be attached. And the advantage of that is, it would be so easy. We already have the players who play these instruments and it would be so easy just to get new kinds of electronic effects with that.

I told you I wrote my 1971 trio, *Memories of Yesterday and Tomorrow*, along those lines--it is written for three players using six instruments. The violinist plays on a regular violin and on an electric violin. The cello--regular cello, electric cello. The pianist plays on a regular piano and the other is a smaller piano in which I threaded medical tape under and over strings and sort of created a kind of muted sound, and so the pianist also used two different instruments.

What I was getting at was that we need other kinds of instruments. I felt that it would be so easy if we used the conventional instruments but attached electronic sounds to them.

So I was interested in carrying that forward. But when I was turned down by the Ford Foundation, I wasn't sure. I

wouldn't have allowed myself to be discouraged, however, because I even remember something I said to my son, Paul, when the first performance was given by the Francesco Trio--David Abel, Bonnie Hampton, Nathan Schartz--who originally commissioned *Memories of Yesterday and Tomorrow*. My son, Paul, was there at the performance and afterwards he said to me, "Dad, I don't know how older people will react, but I know the younger people all liked your piece." I remember what I said, I said to him that I was absolutely certain that I was on the right track. And I said to him, "If no one liked what I did, I would still continue doing it."

Crawford: Good for you.

Sheinfeld: Of course, it's not easy, and one prefers to have some appreciation. So having said that, I'll go back and say that I don't think that the fact that they turned me down caused me to give up that idea--I had already moved on and I had begun to see the possibilities, even without using other instruments, without using electric instruments, of what could happen with polyphony. I think that I just moved on from there and that was all.

And so in *Memories of Yesterday and Tomorrow*, in *Confrontations*, in *Time Warp for Orchestra*, I did use electric instruments, and also *The Earth as a Sounding Board*. *E=MC²* does not use any electric instruments. But in *The Earth is a Sounding Board* I still used an electric violin.

Crawford: Well, I'm looking here at a review of *Dreams* and the reviewer liked it tremendously and described it in various ways--how tonality was pitted against atonality in the string section, and so on. And finally he says, "This is a kind of music that merits repeating." He wanted to hear it again--he needed to hear it again to really understand it.

Sheinfeld: I have only myself to blame, I suppose--the reason it hasn't been done since is I haven't submitted it anywhere. I may have mentioned to you that I did a renotation. Did I tell you about this?

Crawford: No.

Sheinfeld: Of *Confrontations*. I did a renotation of it which I finished eight or nine years ago. And that made it possible for practically the whole piece to be done by just two conductors controlling nearly everything except a few places which I allowed to be free anyway. So I have that and I think I will at some point try to call it to someone's attention. But I

don't have the parts for it, I have the score for that and there would have to be new parts made. But it's all rennotated. And otherwise there is very little revision in the piece, itself.

I did change one little thing: I had done something for just the electric violin at one moment, and I didn't like it. I didn't like that so I changed that, as I mentioned. I shortened that solo which caused people to laugh, when I had brought everything to a tremendous climax of atonality and nearly every instrument is playing in a different tempo and then there is a pause and a violinist gets up and goes over to the piano, where in the key of G minor they start--well, that just broke up every audience in Oakland and San Francisco.

Crawford: Yes, you said that a member of the orchestra said, "David Sheinfeld got his revenge here. Usually people laugh when the music is atonal, this time he gets them to laugh when the music is tonal." [laughter] Which of these works has been published?

Thoughts about Publishing

Sheinfeld: None of the orchestral works have been published. I haven't made any attempt. I did make one attempt and that was due to the fact that I was approached by a publisher when the San Francisco Symphony did my *Confrontations*.

A publisher came--I was sitting in the conductor's box--Seiji had me sitting in that box and a man came in who introduced himself, from Associated Publishers. He told me that he would like me to send him that score, but when it all finally came down to it, they didn't publish it. So that was that. And I've made no further attempts. I don't care whether they publish it or not as far as I'm concerned. The piece is here, the works are here.

My chamber music is being published. Fallen Leaf Press has published both of my string quartets, my organ work. And *Threnody* has been published.

Crawford: Ann Basart is the head of Fallen Leaf Press?

Sheinfeld: Yes, Ann Basart.

Thoughts about Society, Religion, and Tolerance

Crawford: I want to talk to you about *Dear Theo*. And other works of the eighties--

Sheinfeld: In the eighties I was doing a lot of just thinking about music which led me as far as I've gone now in my ideas. You're aware that Schoenberg, for instance, had eight years of silence.

So if I had a year, practically of silence--I'm not comparing myself to Schoenberg, by the way--but in any case, I was thinking out some of my ideas. I didn't always have as much time to compose, so when I had to think out certain ideas, that took time away from composing. But I was doing the right thing for myself; it caused me to go where I'm going.

Crawford: Would you consider yourself fairly prolific?

Sheinfeld: I would say this, I could be a great deal more prolific than I am. I have to strive--and I write a lot of things down on paper, a lot of things--and I look at them and I think about them and so on, and then I don't accept them. I think to myself, I can do better than this, and then all of a sudden it comes and when I feel, "That's alive, that's it. That's what's going to be," that goes down on paper.

And as I have said, I have written so many pages that I've simply destroyed that what I actually have is like a small tip of a very large iceberg. So that's the way I would describe the process.

Crawford: A work I like very much is *Dear Theo*. I'd like to explore with you the idea of bringing that to operatic form.

Sheinfeld: I had a feeling--a very deep sympathy for Vincent Van Gogh. When I undertook to write this work, I read his letters--I read the whole book of letters of his and I read a biography that was current at the time by a British writer--I think David Sweetman is his name, and I really delved very deeply into the life of this man.

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Sheinfeld: Do you know Rembrandt's painting, "The Night Watch?"

Crawford: In the Rijksmuseum?

Sheinfeld: As you enter, there it is! Just as in Florence, when you are walking toward the Accademia which has so many of Michelangelo's sculptures. The "David," for blocks ahead of time you see it because the doors of the Accademia are open and that is so prominent--the "David" that they have in the Piazza de la Signorina is just a copy.

Crawford: Yes.

Sheinfeld: Every time we were in Amsterdam we would go to the Van Gogh Museum. There's a whole museum devoted to his works. And I have loved his paintings almost from the very first time that I came into contact with them.

Crawford: I think your music finds the anguish of the paintings so clearly, and I remember reading that your work is often more about the passion of loss than love. Does that strike a chord at all? For instance in *Dear Theo*, in *Threnody*, there is that sense, I think.

Sheinfeld: Yes, there is. I felt very sad when I was writing that, of course. I don't know. Caroline, composers--when a person creates a work of art--whether that is a poem, a novel, a painting, a piece of music--people are going to speak about that work of art and they give their reactions to it. Those reactions may not be the same that the actual creator has had. They may not be the same feelings, but that's fine. That's just great that people have these different reactions.

So I don't know that I would think of my work that way. Were you speaking generally of my work or just of *Dear Theo*?

Crawford: *Threnody* and *Theo*.

Sheinfeld: Well, yes. I suppose I'd have to admit that, but it's my reaction. Last week when you were here, I said to you that I was a rebel--I'm not really a rebel--I didn't really express myself correctly. I am in disagreement with a lot of things that go on in our society, and I realize the use of the word rebel implies a willingness to overthrow something and that isn't at all what's in my mind. I'm more a skeptic than a rebel.

As I've said, I think there are certain institutions which are lovely and which we would in fact want to maintain, but others--why do we have to go on thinking the same way? Right now, just right now as I'm talking to you, the universe is changing. It's already different from what it was two seconds ago! It's constantly changing and I'm not inventing

that. And Einstein didn't invent it. Many centuries--it was a few centuries, B.C.--there was a Greek philosopher by the name of Heroclitus who said, "When I dip my toes into this brook, the water is never the same. The water that touches it is never the same." That's the same thought. Things are changing all the time, and yet we want stability. I want stability, I don't want to have things constantly changing, but I do have the awareness that we should be prepared.

And I hope, Caroline, ourselves--rather than it should be done at some point violently, I hope that we should be prepared to learn the lessons of history, that great civilizations have gone down the drain. And they have gone down the drain because they have refused at times to accept reality of certain situations. I would hope that we would put our best minds to work to save this great civilization--it is a great civilization.

You know, it was Jacob Bronofsky in that television series--in the last episode--who reminds us--after all he was a student at Cambridge--that the next step may not come from us, from the West. He said, "We have lost our nerve." He said, "I would hate to see that, I don't want to see Shakespeare and Beethoven fossilized."

Well, you feel that way and I feel that way. One of the things I did to relax after all that hard work that I did on $E=MC^2$ was I read two Shakespeare plays. And I deliberately chose them because they are both fantasies. One was *The Tempest* and the other was *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

They were so marvelous and it's been so long since I read them, and then in the meantime I had matured more, and somehow I appreciated them more than I have ever done. And some of those marvelous places--when Prospero says, "We are such things as dreams are made of..."

Crawford: "Our little lives are rounded in a sleep."

Sheinfeld: "In a sleep." Yes. And before then he talks about the fact that, "All the things that I conjured up before you, they're just illusions," you know. And when Theseus in *Midsummer Night* says that "Mad men and poets do have this thing in common, they look up to heaven and from heaven down to Earth"--I'm not quoting him very well, but basically that's what he says. And he says, "the poet in a fine frenzy, eyes rolling and all looks up to heaven and down to Earth, and out of the insubstantial gives substance and out of nonreality gives substance and a name." I think that's marvelous. That's just marvelous.

Crawford: You felt something there for yourself.

Sheinfeld: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Yes. And so what I'm saying is that, like Bronofsky, I don't want to see all of that marvelous civilization going down the drain. I am in this sense very much against what I see on this Earth. I've said that to you before.

Indications are that the society we live in is not functioning properly. That should not happen. I'm not ready to overthrow that society but my criticism is that it is not functioning properly. The fact that we allow that to continue, to me, that's just downright uncivilized and immoral. That should not be allowed.

Crawford: It looks like a loss of nerve.

Sheinfeld: I mentioned this marvelous British physicist, James Jeans, who said at one time, "There are more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on all the beaches of this planet."

He also said another remarkable thing, he said, "Our universe is not only something far beyond what we imagine, but it is far beyond what we can possibly imagine." So that is more in keeping with what I would like to see.

I would like to see us at least recognizing that we shouldn't just forever keep on going with the same thing--and having these stupid politicians who make all kinds of statements that are meaningless.

By the way, do you know that wonderful statement that Mark Twain once made? He said, "Are you an idiot? Are you a politician? Oh, excuse me, I'm repeating myself." [laughter]

But anyway, I can't stand it when I see that at a time when we so drastically need it--that instead of giving their thoughts really to positive things, all they do is attack each other over little meaningless differences that have no substance, even.

And it's in this sense that I am very much opposed to what goes on. I don't think that people should have to live without the absolute basic requirements of humanity--food and shelter.

I also think that people shouldn't live in fear, which they do nowadays, of losing their jobs because a company can downsize. And you know, I experienced that through my older

son. It was during the time that Dorothy was already in the hospital and my son, Dan, who lives in southern California, lost his job--not due to anything he did but to downsizing. Dan is a decent and intelligent person, and he did his job well.

Crawford: What was the corporation?

Sheinfeld: It was a phone company in Covina, or West Covina--you know that? He had worked for them for years--Dan was just fifty on the thirteenth of this month--and the idea is you get rid of some of these older people because then you don't have to pay them pensions, and you get rid of--and you bring in younger people who come in at lower salaries and all of that.

But the thing is that Dan was out of work for over a year. And he tried desperately to get work. And I didn't tell Dorothy this. She was in the hospital, she didn't know, but there were a few times that I had to help them. Three or four months in a row I paid on their mortgage, I paid their house, otherwise they would have lost their house. And I was not in the position to do that, Caroline--I had given up teaching and I don't really have that much of an income anymore, but Dan had to be helped. And I did help him--he tried everything!

He finally got a job, and in the meantime he also took tests at the post office and he was finally called for the post office, also. And for a long time, for about four or five months, Dan was moonlighting. He was working on his job in the daytime which was physically demanding, and then he'd go right from there, drive over an hour or an hour and a half to get to his job in the post office and work at the post office.

He did that for a long time, until the company that hired him originally on this physically demanding job wanted to move him over to the night shift. And of course, if it came down to that, he chose the post office because the post office pays better anyway. So he's now back working on one job but he's still looking for a second job because he wants to make up for all of that money that they lost. And if anybody tries to say that people are out of work because they're not looking for it, that's total nonsense. Dan loves his family enough that he was willing to work on two jobs.

Crawford: Yes, it's terribly inhumane, our system.

Sheinfeld: My son and daughter-in-law in this area are really especially lovely people. She is a very good teacher; last year she was named the teacher of the year, and my son works hard. He is an

office manager, and they do very well, but I was telling them that I had gone through such a dreadful period in my life because I lost my wife and at the same time I was terribly worried about my son, Dan. And all of that happening at the same time, it was just driving me crazy!

Of course they realized what I had gone through--but you know what they said? "Dad, if the two of us weren't working, we couldn't make it either." And you know, they're sort of worried.

Crawford: It's a nation of haves and have-nots.

Sheinfeld: Exactly. I think it's wrong. I think that in a society which can do all of the marvelous technological things that go on, that in human terms that people should live in fear of losing their job--to me that's unacceptable. And that is what I object to.

I haven't said this to you before, but I have also been a great student of history and I know the history of different civilizations. I have been a great admirer of the Chinese civilization, Chinese culture, which is why at one time I told you I took lessons in Chinese music, because I wanted to know more about that and so on. And I read about ancient civilizations--there was a wonderful book by H.G. Wells, *An Outline of History*.

I read the whole thing and I still remember one statement that he made. He said, "We have not made any advances, actually, over the ancient Greeks. The only difference between us and the ancient Greeks is that we have buttons to push." That's the way he put it. I still remember it because that was so beautifully put. But we have seen civilizations go down the drain. The Romans were such capable, marvelous engineers; they went down the drain.

Crawford: Slave economies, too, the Greeks and the Romans.

Sheinfeld: Of course. Yes, but you see, after all, the slaves took the place of our technological discoveries. What I'm getting at is that this is going to more and more cause unemployment. Maybe right now it doesn't, but the computers are able to, computers will themselves make other computers.

But that's a part of what's happening in our century, especially since the Second World War, that more and more people who were originally colonial people are demanding their own rights and their own dignity as people. And they are not

only demanding it, but they are remembering with anger that they were kept down as colonials, and it could lead to violence. We have to learn the world has shrunk and we have to learn to get along together. I can't understand, Caroline, why people kill each other over small differences. I can't understand why people in Ireland--why Protestants and Catholics are killing each other.

Crawford: Among the most civilized people.

Sheinfeld: They are. And I cannot understand that. And you know the funny thing is that I am not a religious person, and I am the one who feels that all human beings should have a natural right to whatever religion they want to have and to practice it and to recognize it and even to respect each other's differences. And here I am, a religious agnostic--maybe part of the reason is because I'm so interested in the universe. I still remember what Stephen Hawking said--this was in a documentary about him--and someone asked him, "Do you believe in God?" And he said, "Well, I don't believe in a personal god." And I could understand that.

I could understand when Einstein said--he also didn't believe in a personal god, his belief was closer to what Spinoza's was. I actually have read Spinoza on that and Spinoza said if God is supposed to be infinite then that cannot have any shape. If you have a shape, you're not infinite, and so on, and so forth.

I may even have told you this incident about the principal horn player in the orchestra--he was a pupil of mine in orchestration, harmony and counterpoint and so on, and we'd become very good friends. Our families even spent a week together up at Lake Tahoe, and so on, and he, of course, got to know me very well.

His name was Ross Taylor--he was the principal horn under Jordana. Anyway, he and his wife were unitarians, I think, and we had a dinner party once in this house and there were quite a number of people and Ross and his wife were present and there was a woman who said that she absolutely wasn't at all religious and didn't even believe in anything. And I said, "Well, I don't either." Ross turned and said, "David! You're the most religious person I've ever met." And at first that sort of threw me, but I realized, of course, that he meant that as a compliment.

But I regard myself as not being religious. I don't choose not to be, I just don't believe it and that's all. On

the other hand, I have treasured and felt a special affection for people who have been deeply religious but were the kind of human beings that religion [should] make but so seldom does. I have known them among both Catholic and non-Catholic Christians, I have known them among Jews; I haven't known them among Moslems because I haven't known enough Moslems, but I'm sure they exist, they exist anywhere.

I remember the husband of the violist in our string quartet--we became very, very good friends. Well, this violist and her husband, they were Catholics--she was much more secular, but Frank was a very pious, very deeply devout person. He was a person of such decency, there was such nobility in that man.

They had numbers of Jewish people as their close friends, they never threw their religion at anyone. Frank never threw his religion at anyone, he just quietly believed and went to Mass every day of his life. I teased him because he was a Wagnerophile. He loved Wagner maybe above everything, and while I certainly recognize Wagner as a great composer--he certainly was that--I was never a Wagnerite. I have felt that there have been other greater composers.

Crawford: Wagner can be a religion all by himself.

Sheinfeld: Well, anyway, Frank would go to every Wagner performance. I used to tease him about that. But that would never change Frank. He had his beliefs, and he stuck to them. But he was a person who actually had nobility in him. And I deeply respected his religious feelings although it was so totally contrary to the way I thought. I am a lost cause.

Dear Theo (1996) and Music of the Past and the Future

[Interview 5: April 28, 1998] ##

Sheinfeld: The tea is boiling--but I need about three more minutes.

Crawford: Shall we get started and you can go see to the tea when it's time?

I would like to start talking today about *Dear Theo* because that's where we left off last time and I find it such an intriguing work. Maybe you'd tell me where the idea

originated for that and how you intend to redesign it as an opera?

Sheinfeld: The idea of doing a piece about Vincent Van Gogh had been in my mind for quite some time. I absolutely love his works. My wife and I had been in Amsterdam several times, and each time that we got to Amsterdam we went to the museum devoted to his works, a Van Gogh museum, as I mentioned.

I consider him one of the greatest painters. The way he puts paint on canvas it almost becomes three-dimensional. One of the last paintings--it's not his last, but one of the last paintings--"Crows Over a Wheat Field," I think is one of the saddest paintings--

So I got the idea to write this work. And when Lucky Mosko, Steven Mosko, approached me and told me that the Contemporary Players wanted to commission me to write a work for them for 1990, I told him that I would like to write about Vincent Van Gogh, a work for nine instruments and a baritone voice, which would be Vincent. And he accepted the idea, so that was great.

Crawford: Had you had dealings with Lucky before?

Sheinfeld: Yes. In 1990 I was starting to work on a symphony which I called *Polarities*. I had submitted a couple of works and a couple of tapes to the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] which I hoped would be accepted and would pay for *Polarities*, and I was waiting to hear from them.

It was in May, in the eighties, and I got a call from my friend, Charles Boone. He was quite excited, he said that a friend of his--Randall Packer, oh, you know him--had gone down to Southern California to what we call Cal Arts, the Institute of Music and Arts, which is I think in Valencia, California.

Lucky Mosko told Randall that he had just returned from Washington where he was one of the judges for new works that were submitted to the NEA, and that all of the judges were unanimous in choosing one work that stood out above all of the 140 submitted to the panel. *BMI* magazine happened to mention how many people had submitted works that year, and I think it was about 140.

But Lucky Mosko said that there was one person whose work clearly stood out above everyone else's, he even said they all felt that they had made a discovery of an important American

composer and the person that he named was myself, David Sheinfeld.

Crawford: Well!

Sheinfeld: And he was very excited about that. And Randall at that time was a very good friend of Charles Boone's and he told Charles about that. So Charles called me in May and I already knew that I was going to be accepted by the NEA--the actual letter of acceptance didn't come until sometime in October--so I already knew that.

So Lucky was sort of excited about that and so when he came through San Francisco for the very first rehearsals for that particular year for the San Francisco Contemporary Players he wanted to meet me. Charles brought Lucky over; we had him and Charles over for breakfast and he told me that I was number one.

Crawford: What did that mean in terms of the NEA? Was there a cash prize?

Sheinfeld: Oh, of course! I got the maximum--I think it was \$15,000, but they gave me the maximum that they could give.

Crawford: That's a wonderful tribute, and it's a tribute to the NEA, too [laughter] because they're so conservative usually!

Sheinfeld: I know that! For me it was very encouraging.

Crawford: Did you have this piece for nine instruments and baritone in mind already when you talked to him?

Sheinfeld: At the time when I first met Lucky? No. At that time I was working on *Polarities*. I told you something about how I organized *Polarities*.

It was later when I began to get the idea to write this work about Vincent Van Gogh, and from the very first moment that I had the idea, I visualized three possible versions of it. One was the version for the Contemporary Players. The others were a possible version for symphony orchestra, and more definitely, a one-act opera.

It was a couple of years later that Lucky Mosko commissioned me to write *Dear Theo*--I think it was '93. That was an important year for me, because in 1993 I got an award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and then it was around that time that the Contemporary Players submitted to the

Koussevitsky Foundation, the music foundation in the Library of Congress, the idea of the work that I wanted to write for them (and of course I sent them tapes and music also) and in '93 I was notified that they had accepted me, that I got this Koussevitsky prize of \$10,000.

I think it was in that year '93 or '94 that John Harbison, the composer, was conducting what they called the Wet Ink Series for the San Francisco Symphony, and I went to that program and Adam Frey [executive director of the S.F. Contemporary players] brought me backstage to meet John Harbison. When he mentioned the name, David Sheinfeld, John Harbison actually got excited. He said to me, "Oh, Mr. Sheinfeld! I was on the jury of the Koussevitsky Foundation that awarded you the prize." He said, "Your music is absolutely beautiful."

Crawford: So how long did it take you to put together this piece?

Sheinfeld: I work slowly. I think it took me about a year or so to finish that and I think it may have taken me a bit longer. But Caroline, that was the time when my wife died and that just knocked me out.

Crawford: Were you able to work?

Sheinfeld: I found my way to solace in working. When I went to my desk and worked, I forgot everything else, so that helped me.

I think it's all right if I tell you a personal thing because I want you to understand something. I knew that my wife now had cancer, and she was planning and hoping that she would be alive to give a big bash for my ninetieth birthday. And I remember telling her that at my age I was really not interested anymore in birthday parties, but I did say to her that the greatest gift I could possibly get for my ninetieth birthday would be the fact that she was alive and well and able to give that.

I also told her I was working on *Dear Theo* and I already knew that I was going to write *E-MC²*. I was already commissioned for that and I would undertake it after I finished *Dear Theo*.

I remember saying to her that every note of both of those pieces was written for her and I hoped that she would be alive to hear them. So it meant very much to me. I sort of made a vow to myself that those two pieces, regardless of what other people were involved in my dedications, those two pieces were

for her. And when she passed away, I decided that those two pieces had to be written, no matter what.

It was terribly difficult: I would go out for a walk and I'd fall and I couldn't get up and people would come running and help me up. I hope they didn't think I was drunk or something. But anyway, I went to see my doctor and he told me that that was perfectly normal. I said, "I just don't have any energy and when I am working, I get very tired and I have to lie down," and so on. And he said to me that that was perfectly normal and it would pass, which indeed it did. When I actually sat at my desk the work required so much concentration that I forgot about everything else. That was my greatest solace.

Crawford: Is that mirrored in the work?

Sheinfeld: No, Caroline. Well, I cannot say for sure that it wasn't, but I must say to you that a piece, that a work is its own thing. And I knew that I was going to have that anguish about Vincent, I knew that. The way that work ended was in my mind. I don't undertake a piece until I have a pretty good idea, even, of how it's going to end. So the ending, exactly the way it was, was in my mind. But a piece of music, at least for me, is its own thing.

Crawford: Do you consider it programmatic in any way?

Sheinfeld: No, no. It's right there. The words, it's right there. After all, I based that work on excerpts from his letters. But I chose the excerpts to occur in a certain way. There is an excerpt here and an excerpt there, and they are not even necessarily chronological. They are there to bring out what I wanted to bring out. When Vincent talks about color, for example--there are several times in different letters, even of different periods that he talks about that, but I put them together.

So I visualized a certain form for the piece. First of all, Vincent's talking about what painting meant to him and color and so on and so forth. And then I visualized a second, a sort of second part in which Vincent now begins to talk about the financial difficulties that he's having and so on: thanking his brother "doubly and twice doubly." Those are actually quotes from his letters. "I thank you for the help you've given me, but I must say to you that life is very hard." Numbers of times he mentions that.

There were times when the man practically went without food in order to have enough money to have brushes and paints for his canvases. The only food he had was the one single meal he was given, staying in that inn. He was given, I think, a supper of some soup and bread and that's it. And he usually saved a few pennies to be able to buy himself some absinthe, which was a very powerful drink, and also which obviously he could afford. That was a drink that people with very little money could buy. There was that marvelous painting by Degas--

Crawford: Oh, yes, the saddest painting.

Sheinfeld: That is terribly sad, you see, the woman and the man, "The Absinthe Drinkers"--well anyway, Vincent would save some money for that. But otherwise, the man was practically starving. I mean he had a dreadfully difficult life.

He started out as a person of such utter sweetness and decency. And he took things seriously. His father was a minister and Vincent was going to follow in his footsteps. He was sent as minister to this place in Belgium where the people were brutally mistreated. The men worked in the mines and didn't have enough money to feed themselves. "The Potato Eaters," by the way, comes from that period. That's all they could afford, that's it, potatoes--if they could afford that.

But he took his ministry seriously and he gave away his clothes, he gave away whatever he could, and he outraged the church authorities and he was fired from the job for taking literally the idea of poverty, and so on. So he was a failure at that. Number one, he failed at that.

And then, [laughter] he enrolled in the school, the art school in Antwerp that was Rubens' home town and he couldn't make it because he absolutely disagreed with all of those academic teachers--same as Beethoven. You know, Beethoven was considered a bad student. He worked on counterpoint with Albrechtsberger and it was completely meaningless to him. And Haydn, he worked with Haydn, and although Haydn knew that Beethoven was talented, he really didn't regard Beethoven as all that great a student. Even Einstein was not a good student. Darwin was not a good student--

So none of these people could follow the academic lines when everything that they were doing was contrary--even though in Beethoven's case the music hadn't yet completely emerged from his mind, but nevertheless, it was there and he couldn't do those dry contrapuntal exercises. They were meaningless to him.

Crawford: They were probably boring to him, too.

Sheinfeld: Boring beyond everything else. And it was the same with Einstein. These were creative minds. And it was the same with Vincent. He just couldn't really work well there, so the result is that he left. They probably thought, 'Good Riddance, this is a waste of time having that guy around thinking he was going to be a painter.' Well, of course, he was going to be a painter.

##

Sheinfeld: There was a group in Brussels called, in fact, The Twenty. It was a group of people interested in painting, and it was to one of these people that Vincent's painting was sold, the only one he sold, and they appreciated him. He might have begun to finally break out of things, when he committed suicide, and I am absolutely convinced beyond any doubt that the reason he committed suicide was not because he thought that he was a failure but because he had had several attacks of insanity and knew it would happen again. That last part in which I write about that and use those words, I was taking liberties. I was not actually quoting any of his letters, but I was having him say things that we all know were in his mind: "I'll be back and I'll be back and I'll be back." In other words, he knew he would be released from the sanitarium, but he knew that it was inevitable, that he would be back.

Crawford: If you revise it, you'd add just one other character and that would be the brother?

Sheinfeld: If I make an opera out of it, I won't change any of the music that has already been written. I will simply expand it. I know exactly what I want. It would be a one-act opera. I probably will not get around to doing it now, and I think it's too bad. Kent Nagano originally was going to do the opera at Lyons--and that would have been the work that I would have started after $E=MC^2$ --but at the end of this season, he will no longer be the music director there. He told me that if I were to write that opera, he would certainly do it in concert version.

But I know exactly what I would do. In fact the piece would end exactly as it ends, except that I visualize Vincent, now mortally wounded, lying in a bed and his brother, Theo, sitting there. Theo adored Vincent; Theo felt that Vincent was a genius and I visualize at the end Vincent now lying in bed and he regains consciousness and Theo is there, and Vincent turns to Theo and says, "Dear Theo"--just exactly those words

that I used--"Dear Brother, I have failed in everything that I have done." When he says that, the stage is in a kind of darkness there, a kind of semi-darkness, and then one part of the stage lights up and we see reproductions of some of his greatest paintings.

Crawford: I can see it. Would Theo's be a tenor voice?

Sheinfeld: Theo would have some singing and he would be a tenor, and some of the women would have minor roles. The opera would have been very, very original, very original.

Crawford: Who would the women be?

Sheinfeld: The women would be that woman in London, that young woman with whom he fell in love and who rejected him; and then his cousin, who loved him and for some reason his parents were very much opposed to that. I wasn't certain about whether I would include the woman that he lived with for a while. There was a prostitute who had a couple of children and he sort of picked her up and gave her shelter--out of his nothingness--and they lived together for a while--I wasn't sure about that. It wasn't because she was a prostitute that I was not going to use it, somehow that didn't appeal to my imagination. And there were other characters like that.

By the way, that insanity, there was something physical there. It ran in the family. The sister, Wilhelmina, also suffered from that, and Theo, after Vincent died, only a few months afterward, I think, had some kind of an attack, and he died.

So there was something physical there, and Vincent was absolutely certain that that was going to keep happening. And the people in that town, in that little town in Provence, they hated him. They couldn't stand having him released: that crazy man who was dirty and so poor that he wore those old rags, and so on.

And the little children used to run after him--I was going to add that. That was going to be one of the scenes, where little children run after him and call him crazy and then idiot and all of that. That would have been one of the things in the opera. Just the little things like that. So the opera would have had brand new music, but all the music that is in the original version would also have been in the opera.

Crawford: I hope you get a chance to do that because it's a powerful work.

Sheinfeld: It depends--Caroline, I have--don't misunderstand me, but I have to have in the back of my mind that I'm in my nineties. I am going to write these things if I am alive and well to do them, but I have undertaken a new work which I'm now very excited about, and it's going to be a very original work. There is one thing I can say. I fulfilled the vow that I made to myself that those two works, *Dear Theo* and *E-MC²*, would be a kind of memorial to my wife. I carried that out and furthermore, they were both very good pieces.

Now that I have undertaken this work for percussion--a percussion soloist and orchestra--I am going to use that in a very different way. The title that I have at the moment is *Different Worlds of Sound*.

I've decided--I haven't said this yet to anyone else, you are the first person hearing it and it will go on the tape--but I have decided that here I am going to write this piece for myself. And I don't care whether--I do care, but I'm not going to let that interfere. I was going to say I don't care whether people like it or not, but I am going to write the piece that *I* want to write.

Crawford: Do you anticipate that they won't like it?

Sheinfeld: I don't anticipate that they wouldn't like it. I think that people will actually like it very much but I merely said that this time I am going to write a work for myself, and whether it's in the line of work being done or not, I really couldn't care less. I do think that people will like it--I already said to you that I don't undertake any work unless I already have a very strong feeling about how it actually ends, and the way I visualize the structure of this present work, it's going to whip up into a real storm at that end. And if it works the way I think, I'll practically have people jumping out of their seats.

So, no. I don't say that people won't like it, I am merely saying that I am going to write this piece and if it's not in the style that's current, there will undoubtedly be people who don't like it--I couldn't care less. When I say that, I don't mean to say that I'm deliberately setting out to write something that nobody else is going to like. I don't write music like that. I write music at least for an ideal listener. I do not agree that a composer should write something that nobody else can understand.

Crawford: Where is music going?

Sheinfeld: The composer, Milton Babbitt--I'm sure you know that name--he's a highly intelligent person, a mathematician. He taught math at Princeton, and he once made a statement years ago, he said that music has gotten to such a point that there's hardly anyone that can follow it. So he said, "We shouldn't even any longer write for an audience, we should just write for ourselves."

Crawford: What do you think about that?

Sheinfeld: Well, my answer to you, Caroline, is that I completely disagreed with it at the time and I disagree with it to this day! To write, to create something in a vacuum is simply--it's an absolute wrong attitude. To write only for a small elite, to write just for other composers.

That is total nonsense. We can not compose or create anything, a painting or a poem or anything in a vacuum, that's ridiculous. In fact, I so strongly believe that that I even believe that although a great deal of the musical future may be carried out through computers because computers are able to do things that human beings cannot do--but it will never be computers alone.

We always, we need to have a human musical source, somebody who is creating that music, somebody who is bringing that music to life and I don't think that the computer alone will work. It can be in association with living performers. No matter what happens in the twenty-first century, it's not just going to be computers alone. We need to bring to life something through a human agency which can create--even make mistakes--but those are living mistakes rather than to have the impersonal perfection of a computer. That, whatever else it is, it ain't. [laughs] So, that's it.

And we can't go back. Today's audiences like melody; they don't have to think. After all, they're tired, they've spent the whole day maybe at an office or whatever--whatever they've done--and they come at night to this concert and they don't want to be challenged, they don't want to think! And here all of a sudden is this nice, traditional stuff coming at them. They appreciate that and they applaud it; and they accept a definite lowering of standards in doing that. But that is not--

Crawford: And that's always been the way, hasn't it?

Sheinfeld: Oh, that has always been the way. Well, I shouldn't say always, because let's understand something: there was a time

when music was a necessary part of one's education--there weren't television sets around, there wasn't radio, there weren't CD's around. If you wanted to be entertained, you felt the need of entertainment, you had to be able to understand what was going on. Therefore, everybody who could afford it was educated in music and for that reason, they could follow--at least up to a point they were able to follow what composers did. They were all educated!

More about *E=MC²* (Symphony No. 2)

Crawford: Have you found your ideal listener? That's a kind of a theme in your writing--do you think these works we're discussing have been heard?

Sheinfeld: Oh, well, Caroline, my second quartet has been beautifully received. It was a big success. I already told you that Charles Boone said, "This is the best thing you've ever done." And when it was done just recently on January 10, it got a tremendous reception. There was a composer there--I suppose it's all right if I mention his name--Donald Aird, the Berkeley composer, and he came over to me and said, "Wonderful." That's the way he felt about the piece. And there was a young man who came over to me and he said, "This has so many beautiful subtleties." And Sandy Wilson of the Alexander quartet was with me on that occasion, and he said he just absolutely loved the work--he said, "I'm looking forward to our doing it." So--

Crawford: So the answer is, "Yes."

Sheinfeld: Yes, and when *E-MC²* was done, I got a standing ovation. And I think I may have mentioned to you that Kent was very impressed by that. He said, "This is the first time I've seen a twentieth-century work getting a standing ovation."

Crawford: That's clear from the tape. Tell me about your approach to the work and the writing of it.

Sheinfeld: I have already said to you on more than one occasion that the person that I consciously feel has had the greatest influence on my musical thinking and my approach to composing is Einstein, by changing the way I think about time and space.

So I thought I could try to change the way I go about relating to musical space and musical time, and in writing $E=MC^2$ I really undertook to do something that was very different in terms of musical time and musical space. I think I did fulfill that, but I did not try to illustrate the formula itself, after all, as I have kept on repeating, this is not a mathematical dissertation, it's a piece of music.

Crawford: What was new in musical terms of your own work for this symphony?

Sheinfeld: I have gone farther and farther along the path of treating musical space and musical time in newer and fresher ways. You already know, I have said this numbers of times, that I treat the language very differently. First of all, I use the whole language--whether at a given moment it's tonal or whether at a given moment it's atonal, or as I do it most of the time, it's just such a mixture of both that it ends up being quite different.

Crawford: You've said that sometimes you think of the atonal as being the dominant chord, but it then finds its resolution in the tonal. Is that relevant here?

Sheinfeld: No, I don't any longer actually do that. I did that for a while, but I realize that if there is a section which is entirely atonal and then I bring in a section which is tonal, even if that section is also dissonant--but just giving a feeling of tonal--it sounds like a kind of resolution of what had happened in the atonal section, and that's all I meant about dominant and tonic.

But I have gone beyond that. And to me, that no longer by itself is relevant. I don't mean to say that I don't do that, but I've gone beyond that.

I have different worlds going on and these worlds are in different musical dimensions. They are in different dimensions from each other. That's the way I visualize them and so I try to carry that out musically. Time, by the way, is only a relative thing. And the way one world visualizes time--we live on this planet, Earth, where we divide our time into twenty-four hours a day, because that's the way the Earth moves around, makes its motion around the sun, but on another planet, that's not going to work because on that planet, where there is life, it may not take place in our twenty-four hours. They may have a different concept about time and a different concept about space.

So I visualize--now this is my imagination--I visualize different worlds which have different concepts about time, but also about how music will be used. Their idea of music is not the same as our idea of music. And furthermore, I don't have to go far: right on this Planet Earth, we have the music of our Western culture which has been a fabulous music, and then we go to India and they have a marvelous music which is totally different--which is based on different ideas of the way they treat time and the way they treat space, and so on and so forth. And right away, one sees that it's entirely possible to have a music which is different, which doesn't have to go along with certain already prescribed ways. This, by the way, is what I am going to try to do, and it's not easy, but this is what I'm going to try to do in this piece that I'm undertaking.

Crawford: *Worlds of Sound.*

Sheinfeld: Also there are going to be clashes of different worlds coming against each other. There will be different musics--plural--different musics going on. In addition to that, I am going to use the percussion soloist as living in a different world from the orchestra and right away, those are different worlds.

It's going to take me time, and I have to find time--unfortunately, there are all of these extraneous things that have to be taken care of but they will be done and I have to then really plunge in and work very hard--very willingly work very hard.

I don't mean any insults--very far from it--toward very, very talented composers--and I don't mean to underrate what they're doing, but I do feel, as I have told you, honestly, that the music of our Western culture has come to a kind of dead end in a way. If composers just stick to atonal music or even serialized atonal music that has reached a dead end, and one can almost predict what's going to happen. The music starts out sounding very beautiful, but it lacks variety--harmonic and "melodic" variety; melodic not to be taken too literally.

Crawford: Minimalism seems to be so popular now--also at a dead end, in your opinion?

Sheinfeld: Exactly. In fact, I regard myself as a "maximalist."

"Maximalism"

Crawford: I know you do. Talk about maximalism.

Sheinfeld: All I mean is that I have a lot of things going on in a very short space of time. I can tell you what my very dear friend, Robert Basart, said once. We were very, very close friends. And he said that I cram about twenty-five minutes of music into a ten-minute piece. He meant that, of course, as a great compliment. But that's what I would call "maximalism." I don't have the patience for minimalism. And again, some of these people are very talented. I remember my son, Paul, once gave me a recording of a work by a very good minimalist composer and it was okay, but I said to him, "This is the kind of a piece where one can turn on the recording and one can read the morning paper and have one's breakfast and when one has finished, they're still on the same chord."

Crawford: Do you remember whose music that was?

Sheinfeld: I would hesitate to say.

Crawford: Then let's talk about fellow maximalists. Who writes in a style today that you appreciate?

Sheinfeld: I appreciate a lot--I think there are great composers around who have written outstanding works, even in minimalism. I don't agree with that, but I'm not a narrow-minded person and they have written some good things. John Adams has done very well, no question about that, although by now he no longer regards himself as a minimalist, he has sort of gone to a kind of tonal music--which is fine, that's his business. I think that younger composers, that's where they have turned. That is neoromantic, and they have been doing that, and it's very good; I just don't agree with it. But the fact that I don't agree with it doesn't mean that they're wrong and I'm right, it's just the way I react. This is the way I look at the world--this is my concept.

In other words, as people in the quantum theory will say, the universe is almost what you see it to be. It's almost a subjective thing in a sense. So I will say that this is subjective with me. That doesn't mean that I don't like the works, I certainly do, I just wouldn't write that way, that is all. If that means that that is a criticism, well, it works from the other end, too. The fact that they do what they're doing is a kind of criticism of what I'm doing.

Pierre Boulez and an Expanded Language ##

Sheinfeld: As you know I don't give any name to what I'm doing, I just compose my music, and so I won't give a name to what Pierre Boulez is doing, but he has written certain works which are works of genius. And that's all there is to it. His *Pli selon Pli* is one of the great orchestral works of the twentieth century. His works certainly aren't performed in concerts much, although you don't need concerts any more, there are now recordings, and that may be the new way that music will go, anyway. Some of his earlier works are simply works of genius. There are other things by him which I think are overly intellectual, I think he did not trust his imagination.

Crawford: Are you talking about what is called texture music, or music that really doesn't have any structure?

Sheinfeld: Well, some of it can be just texture. The last time that Pierre Boulez was in San Francisco, his concert, I think, was devoted to a work that he had written for clarinet and tape, and then he did a large work of his and it was texture music, that's all. It was actually--I'm sorry to say this, but it was sort of disappointing. It was disappointing. That particular work could not have been written by anyone but an excellent composer--it took an excellent composer to write that disappointing piece. There were moments in it which were ravishingly beautiful. But there were just moments--and I don't know--I'm not sure that he's written anything since. He might even have written himself out.

He is now going into electronic--to computer music. That's what IRCAM--he's the head of IRCAM--is doing and so on. But I feel that some of these composers have written themselves out, and the reason that they've written themselves out is not that they suddenly have come to an end of their talent or imagination, but rather that the language that they use no longer permits them to go forward. That is what I meant by the way music has now come up against a wall.

I have mentioned to you Alfred Korzybski, who founded semantics. He said that when we talk about something, we're not really saying what that something is; we can't, that something is a separate thing. We can talk about this cup, but we're not really, really telling you what the cup is--remember the Belgian Rene Magritte and that painting about a pipe, and he says, "This is not a pipe."

Well, actually that is the sort of thing that Korzyibski meant. I didn't read the whole book, but I did read here and there I very well do remember one chapter in which he talks about the need of a language in order to be able to go forward. He points out that the Romans, great engineers that they were and great in other faculties, they were hampered mathematically because they did not have a mathematical language, they just used the letters of the alphabet to describe their numbers and they of course did not have the concept of zero at all. Korzhibsky goes on and he says, "Any schoolboy today knows more mathematics than the Romans did."

Then he goes on and he points out that when Einstein came up with the idea of relativity, which took us out of the Planet Earth, Einstein created a new geometry. It was no longer the Euclidean geometry, it was a new geometry. It was a new language. And because physicists who followed Einstein had a new language, they could use that and all of a sudden a whole generation of geniuses was born.

Crawford: This is what you've done in music.

Sheinfeld: Yes, we need to have a broader language---and this is what I have tried to do.

Crawford: Still you feel a composer has a responsibility to create structure.

Sheinfeld: Structure has to be there. I remember a discussion that I had with Bob Basart about structure and I made the outrageous statement to him, I said, "Bob, if you want to write about chaos, you have to structure it, because if you don't you'll just have chaos." And he laughed and he agreed with me. But it is something that we as human beings, with our anthropomorphic shapes which reflect themselves in the way we think, require.

For example, we look up at the skies and we divide certain groupings of stars into what we call constellations. Those aren't constellations, those are not groupings of stars. Those stars don't say to each other, "Hey fellows, we all belong to Sagittarius, and we shouldn't even talk to those groups of stars that belong to Orion," or anything like that. Orion is only a temporary thing. Those stars are all so far away that it takes about 5,000 years before the way we see the stars will change.

But there will come a time when there won't be the Belt of Orion, there will come a time when there won't be the Big

Dipper, or the Little Dipper, or whatever. And that is going to make it awfully hard on astrologers, I know, but they'll find other things. But we find forms because it's necessary. The universe doesn't have form, the universe wasn't made for our benefit and it does not have form and structure--we find it--

Crawford: It's almost like religion, isn't it? It's a way of trying to make sense of it.

Sheinfeld: Yes, of course. Of course, and that's perfectly natural. That's perfectly all right. After all, we live. We're alive. And we naturally want to find a kind of stability in our lives. We want to find a way of interpreting who are we, what are we, where are we going, what's going to happen to us? That's natural, that's perfectly natural. I'm sure that's going on in millions of places in other galaxies or maybe somewhere in our own galaxy. Living beings on other planets won't necessarily look like us or be like us, so I'm using the word people very loosely.

Composing Symphony No. 2 and Aleatory Music

Crawford: I see what you're saying. Well, would you talk a little bit about how it was to compose that piece? You were telling me when I came in today that you worked day and night to finish that symphony.

Sheinfeld: I was saying to you that of course I was not doing a musical translation of $E=MC^2$. For us laymen it would even be enough just to say $E=M$. That's all. Energy and matter, as Einstein realized, are simply interchangeable. They are simply different forms of each other. Matter is frozen energy and energy is liberated matter. It's free. That's all. That's going on. We see that in the sun. The sun is emitting out of its matter, it's emitting energy all the time.

Then his use of the term C simply meant that it requires the speed of light to make that exchange. I'm not absolutely certain, I'm not a mathematician, that that's what he meant, but that was his formula. And by the way, he arrived at that formula after he had conceived the whole thing. He first thought of it intuitively and then reasoned it out. And Einstein thought in terms of pictures, in visual objects.

He would visualize these things and see them that way and then he would find the mathematics to explain that. So what "E equals M" really means is that energy and matter are different forms of each other. But he goes, of course, much farther and he comes into the idea of relativity--that the only real constant is the speed of light. That's the constant.

I wasn't going to do exactly that in my piece of music, but I do that imaginatively. For example the last movement is largely an *ostinato* movement. The second violin of the string quartet starts out [sings] and there are different forms of that--and that remained, that *ostinato* is present almost throughout the entire work in different forms. In this case [sings] it makes a seven--one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-one-two [sings], but it also has a form of five [sings] and so on and so forth.

It also turns itself into a five and it turns itself into different forms of that original--what I just sang to you, by the way, wasn't the five. I was really singing the retrograde, [sings] the backward form of the original. But it's also got the five. The point is that I have an *ostinato* figure going on, a constantly recurring figure--do you know what the literal translation of the Italian word means?

Crawford: Stubborn! [laughter]

Sheinfeld: That's right, you know that. So that's what *ostinato*--obstinate, obstinate--my use of an *ostinato* figure, is the constant. Now that doesn't mean that it travels at the speed of light, but I put a constant in there and against that constant I have all kinds of relative things going on differently. Even the lyrical passages which the string quartet plays against this kind of impersonal thing is, itself, a relative thing. They're playing something quite expressive and songful at times and then they play in thoroughly different tempos from the orchestra, generally--almost always faster.

Crawford: Are there aleatory elements?

Sheinfeld: No, there are aleatory elements in a lot of my music--just in little places, they are very minor. I think last week I explained to you some of the things that I did in my First String Quartet and I explained a section in which the second violin starts an *ostinato* in the key of D minor and D major, if I recall right [sings]. No, no, no, it's D minor and D-flat [Major] going on at the same time by the second violin. And against this, at a certain point the first violin plays a very simple little tune. And when the second violin has started

that *ostinato* figure, the viola and cello sort of comment on it and they comment on it very freely, that's sort of aleatory.

I say to them at a given point, "Play this as fast as possible, this is faster." And I show where the viola--the viola has to have in its part the cello part so it can take over. The cello part has to have in its part the viola part so they have to take over at a certain point, but they play as fast as possible.

I've had moments like that in a lot of my pieces. I've had that in *The Earth is a Sounding Board*, which I wrote at around the same time as that First String Quartet. I've had that in *Polarities*, where I will have a certain instrument play a whole figure and then I say, "Each time you repeat this, play it faster." And way back in the sixties when I wrote my first orchestral work in my new style, *Confrontations*, I had such passages. I had passages where I have a percussionist near the end of the piece playing the figure totally free of the conductor as fast as he can.

Crawford: Of course the instrumentalists love this, don't they?

Sheinfeld: So--yes! But that's as far as I go with aleatory movement. I will do a lot of that in the present work also, but I try as far as I possibly can to find a notation.

A New Work: Worlds of Sound

Crawford: You have said that your greatest work to date is *E=MC²*.

Sheinfeld: I think so. I think that I have--I think it's my best work so far. But I have to bring the new work to realization and I may not succeed: but if I do succeed in where I'm going, I think this next work will be my strongest work, because I'm going ever farther along that road of treating musical time and musical space.

In this work, in this new work, whether I'm tonal or atonal is almost irrelevant. That's where I said I no longer do that kind of a feeling of atonality being the kind of dominant to the tonic of tonality. It's almost irrelevant. And the way I'm going to use different motions, different kinds of rhythmic styles going on at the same time makes one kind of rhythm--just one kind--almost irrelevant, so if I succeed in carrying that out, that could be the best thing I've ever done.

Crawford: Do you still think in terms of a musical journey with a beginning, middle, and end; climax and resolution? Is that still in your theoretical thinking?

Sheinfeld: In a sense, yes. I do not want to deliberately write that kind of a work but it comes out that way. For example, as I visualize this new piece it will again have three movements. And the middle movement is going to do some very special things--I'm not going to talk about that now, I just want to carry it out--but it's going to do some very special things: setting off one kind of mood, especially against something which comes against it later and then it will return to that mood.

The last movement, as I say, is going to work things up into a kind of frenzy of excitement. Look, already there is a structure and you might say that that's a kind of resolution of where that piece is going. You can already see how much of that piece I have in my mind. I know exactly the kind of a piece that I want to write. I even have numbers of musical ideas for that. And now I set out on the journey and it's going to be a long journey, and it might at times even be a painful journey to carry that out.

There are times when the ideas that I want to use, they're just not there. They're stubborn, they're hiding behind a corner and I have to wait and I like to sit. I have a chair just like the one you're sitting on upstairs in my room and I sort of sit on that chair and I don't know why--it's a curious psychological thing--and I sit on it and just sort of lean back and close my eyes and I let myself sort of think and dream and ideas start to come and the looser I am, the better.

I've told you that sometimes when I'm out on a walk, I've even been thinking about something else and then I turn my mind back to music, and as soon as I do that--boom--there's an idea. That's what I've been waiting for, looking for. And so I come home and I write it out.

Crawford: How much are you composing now?

Sheinfeld: I have said to friends that a composer works twenty-four hours a day. I know when I was working on *Polarities* I worked slowly--because I work slowly--I could work a lot faster, but I'm not going to just write anything.

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Sheinfeld: So I'm working really in one sense twenty-four hours a day--I'm trying to find a mathematical formula where I can have eight days a week and more than twenty-four hours in a day. I have not succeeded in finding that.

Crawford: [laughter] Well, you can create any calendar that you want, according to your theory.

Sheinfeld: That's it. If I could have had more than twenty-four hours a day I would have worked more than twenty-four hours a day, and if I could have had more than seven days a week I would--so that's my answer.

I'm not always aware of it--but I might be riding in a street car or something and somebody starts whistling and it disturbs me, and I suddenly realized that it's clashing against my thoughts--because I've been having music going on in my mind and that creates a dissonance against what I have been doing. Or I'll walk on the street and people will come along and maybe some loud voices--and suddenly that bothers me, because it's interrupting me--I mean music goes on in my head all the time. It's just a perpetual motion thing, and I have no control over that.

Crawford: Do you dream in music? Wake up and have a new idea?

Sheinfeld: Oh, I have gotten some great ideas waking up! In fact it happens to me in almost every piece, there comes a point where I will wake up and suddenly what I have been looking at and thinking about, a whole structure just unfolds for me, for that particular moment or that entire movement or whatever. And that's it, and I know that's it and I'll get up and go over to my desk and write out all those ideas--and this is it, this is the way it happens to me with practically every piece that I write.

The best moment is when one is in that kind of half asleep and half awake period when one just gets up in the morning and that's the best time.

Crawford: You were under pressure with $E=MC^2$ to finish on time--does that present special difficulties?

Sheinfeld: Yes. I realized that the only way that I could finish that work was really to spend as much time as I could--and there were all kinds of things I should have done: that fence there, that once blew over a couple of years ago in a storm. Well, my wife wasn't around, I had to take care of those things.

So that certainly was on my mind. I had to interview people and finally get someone to put it up. And so on: when the roof leaked and I finally had to have a roofing job done, I had to do that. When the exterior of the house had to be repaired, they found a lot of dry rot and replaced a lot of things and then painted the whole house, and so that took time. If those things hadn't happened, I could have finished those pieces, both *Dear Theo* and *E=MC²*, a lot sooner.

There was a point when I needed to have an extension of time for *E=MC²*, and I notified Kent and other people involved at the Berkeley Symphony that I absolutely needed more time. So they allowed me until February the fourteenth. That was just about three months more. I really needed more time, but they couldn't do that because originally it was supposed to be the Kronos Quartet that was going to play *E=MC²*. Kent has a very friendly relationship with David Harrington, the first violinist of the quartet and originally he wanted them and so that was it. And the only time that the two of them could find was in February.

So that was hard on me, but I wasn't going to compromise one single note in my piece. I wouldn't write one note that I felt I did because I had to rush.

Crawford: When you're actually doing notation do you revise a lot? Do you put aside away a great deal that you've put down?

Sheinfeld: Oh, I have. What finally goes down on paper, the final version, is like the small tip of an iceberg. I do that over and over because I am so--this is a habit of mine, I am so accustomed to being able to read any kind of music, just anything, any sound, anything, that when I see it before me and then I hear it and judge it I often say to myself, "David, you can do better than that." And that's it.

I even know when I write it down that that's not going to be there at end, but it helps me, it's a part of the evolution of the development of that idea. So that's not wasted, that has taken me farther along and then I will write something else which also goes in the wastebasket, and something else which goes in the waste basket and finally--as I've said to you, and I think I just said that today--I say to myself, "That's alive. Now that goes down on paper, that's it."

Music has to have a personality, it shouldn't just be like any other piece. No matter how good, it has to have a personality. I have to feel that it's alive, then I put it down on paper. But I write pages--who knows how many hundreds

of pages of actual notation have gone down which ultimately are torn up and thrown away.

Crawford: Is it preferable for you to work, as you're working now on this new piece, without a commission date? Or to work as you did on the symphony, *E=MC²*?

Sheinfeld: I prefer not to have a deadline. I don't need to have a deadline to make me work. I very willingly work. In fact, I don't compose as a part of my life, it is my life, that is my life.

Musical Sources

Crawford: What are the sources of your musical ideas now? Are they all interiorized, or are you getting some from outside, from books, from television, from concerts?

Sheinfeld: Oh, either way. As you know, I'm very much interested in physics and astronomy, and if I'd sit down and start reading a book about the universe I would get so excited that all of a sudden my mind would start operating musically. And I'd run to my desk and as I said to my wife, "I'm not able to read!" Because when I read it just started giving me ideas--so I can get ideas from anything. For example, recently there was a series of programs on Stephen Hawking's universe.

I can get ideas from looking at some great paintings. We were, in '93, in New York. We went to the Museum of Modern Art, and there was a painting by Seurat, a marvelous painting of the ocean and the sun, and the light on the ocean and the different effects that that created. And it just got me all excited--I thought to myself, 'It just shows that even with simple things, great art can be created.' That's what Seurat did, that marvelous painting. And things like that immediately start me thinking--shall I get you some more tea?

So those things feed me musical ideas. If I read a beautiful poem, it gives me musical ideas. I told you I recently reread *The Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*; they gave me musical ideas--practically speaking, there was Shakespeare waiting to give David some musical ideas.

Unexpected things--sometimes on television or something. I don't watch much television, there isn't really much that one

can watch, but sometimes when I'm seeing something and my mind obviously is on music, it gives me an idea.

I've said that the music of the West has come to a kind of dead end, but what am I going to do, put myself on the planet Mars?

Crawford: Even you are limited? [laughter]

Sheinfeld: Of course! But within that, I can free myself from that music, there are different ways in which one can think about polyphony and, by golly, I get those ideas. Once I free my mind, they are there. That is how the second movement that I worked on for *E=MC²* took me off in a totally different direction.

As I've said, there are so many things that can be done with both linear succession and harmonic or polyphonic happenings if one frees oneself from the notion that polyphony either has to be consonant or dissonant or anything like that. That has become absolutely irrelevant in my music except at moments when I deliberately make that relevant. Because I don't throw anything out, one can use anything, either from the past or whatever but not as itself. One puts it into a new context and it becomes something different.

Crawford: Will there still be reminders in your work of nineteenth-century works?

Sheinfeld: No. There won't be. There won't be any reminders of any work, unless those are unconscious--they are not intended by me. I'm leaving the earth and I'm going off into space--the new geometry, Einstein's new geometry, so to speak.

But I not only will say to you there may be, I know that there will be those things, because when I'm walking around and thinking about the musical language, I think to myself, 'For heaven's sake, I can even use a simple diatonic statement at one moment, suddenly, just a simple, little quite openly tonal statement because we have different worlds going on against each other.'

Crawford: So you can make use of the Euclidean world?

Sheinfeld: Sure, I can! In *Memories of Yesterday*, there is a moment there which really sounds a tiny bit like Chopin, or a moment there very much which in my mind sounded like Brahms. And so I never quote them, I do my own music, but I sound like that, that's a part of my memory.

There is nothing like that in any of my other works. There was one place where I did that, but that's a piece which I've already said to you was not good--it has some very good things in it, but as a work, it was not good--that was *Time Warp*. That was not a good piece, but it was a piece that was not good that helped me to find the way to be good. It was necessary for me to make those mistakes, to find my direction and so say to myself, "You're never going to do that kind of thing again!" And that's it.

Thoughts about Teaching

Crawford: How about teaching? What did that represent in your composing life?

Sheinfeld: I always enjoyed my teaching because I had very serious students. When I had students that I realized were not good, I did not allow them to continue working with me. I just would not have that. So my students were always talented people and good people and I enjoyed working with them. And I didn't teach any two of them in exactly the same way.

Crawford: Would you mention some of them that you thought were outstanding?

Sheinfeld: I think that from a compositional standpoint, the best student I ever had was this German student that I spoke to you about, his name is Christian Jost. He was born in either Cologne or Trier, Germany, and he now lives in Cologne. He worked with me for a couple of years, and he's really turned out to be very good. But I must also say something to you that Hindemith once said: "You spend a whole life teaching and if you have, at the end of that time, turned out two people who are really good composers, it has been worth while." So Christian Jost is actually operating as a successful composer--

But I've had other students who could have done that. I had a student of real talent--I won't mention his name, because I think it would be embarrassing to him, but he is a very decent, a very sweet person. Talented, no question about that, intelligent, no question about that, but he was simply discouraged. He just couldn't really get performances and yet he wrote things for me that showed that he really could compose.

That is one of the problems. We are not living in an era which is friendly toward the arts and that is it. And composers have to work hard--if you're really dedicated, you work in spite of the social conditions. I have at times said to friends of mine and to pupils of mine that our present century finds us a kind of nuisance and it might be better if they just put us into a rocket and shot us off into space and got rid of us.

Of course they won't do anything as drastic as that. But we're a kind of embarrassment, because they don't need us anymore. There is a whole tremendous backlog of great art, great paintings, great literature, great music--so who needs us? And we come along and some of us feel that, "Yes, it is important." I feel that music is simply man's greatest accomplishment, most beautiful accomplishment, and I feel that it's worth it. That if I get no rewards except the actual feeling of reward for having written a given work, I'll do it anyway.

Charles Boone once was asked to give a lecture about twentieth-century music and I was there, I was in the audience. He was talking about writing and he said he would never compose a work unless it's been commissioned but he said, "I know a person who is so dedicated that he'll write a work even if it hasn't been commissioned. That's my friend, David Sheinfeld," and he mentioned me right there. And that is the way I feel about it.

But I know that this is an ever-shrinking little circle of people. We live in a technological age, this is the great age--in fact it's even going to accelerate, the computers themselves will make that happen, and so who needs us? Who needs this art? But to me, that is important. To me it is important to create something again which hasn't existed, to take that little statement--you know it--"to give shapes out of airy nothing."

So many people liked $E=MC^2$. They just loved that piece, and that helps to make it worth while. I know that even if it's a shrinking circle, it is still there.

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Recent Works and Premieres

Symphony No. 2: *E=mc²* (1998), for orchestra and string quartet as "independent bodies."

Commissioned and premiered by the Berkeley Symphony, Kent Nagano, conductor, with the Alexander Quartet, February 13, 1998.

Dear Theo (1996), for nine instruments and baritone voice with text based on the letters of Vincent Van Gogh

Commissioned by the San Francisco Contemporary Music players with a grant from the Koussevitzky Foundation.

Premiere performance September 30, 1996 by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Stephen Mosko, conductor, with Leroy Kromm, baritone.

String Quartet No. 2 (1993)

Commissioned by the Kronos Quartet
Premier performance January 1994,
by the Kronos Quartet, Emeryville,
California.

Symphony No. 1: Polarities, (1990) for large orchestra

Commissioned with a grant from the National Endowment of Arts.
Premiere performance March 1997 by the Berkeley Symphony, Kent Nagano, conductor.

The Earth is a Sounding Board, (1978) for orchestra and small chorus. Written at the request of Seiji Ozawa

Premiere performance March 10, 1993 by the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, Kent Nagano conductor,

and The Pacific Mozart Ensemble, Richard Grant, conductor.

In Progress (1998-99)

Different Worlds of Sound (1999)

Commissioned by Kent Nagano, work for percussion and orchestra.

Dear Theo (1999)

In development as a one-act opera.

Compositions and First Performances 1946-1998

Adagio and Allegro (1946) for orchestra.

San Francisco Symphony, Pierre Monteux, Conductor, March, 1947
Chicago Symphony, Pierre Monteux, conductor, August, 1947.

Concerto for Orchestra (1949)

San Francisco Symphony, Pierre Monteux, conductor, February, 1951.

Sonata for Violin Solo (1950)

David Abel, violin, Veteran's Auditorium, San Francisco, May, 1956
Anshel Brusilow, violin, Cleveland, 1962.

Fantasia (1951), for trumpet, piano, percussion and strings.

Aspen Festival Orchestra, William Steinberg, conductor, April, 1956
San Francisco Symphony, Enrique Jordá, conductor

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1955)

Anshel Brusilow, violin, Philadelphia
Orchestra, William Smith, conductor,
April, 1965

Jacob Krachmalnick, violin, San
Francisco Symphony, Josef Krips,
conductor, January, 1967.

Concerto for Woodwinds and Chamber Orchestra
(1957)

Solo instruments: flute, oboe, clarinet,
and bassoon

Little Symphony of San Francisco,
Gregory Millar, conductor, January,
1958

Etudes for Orchestra (1959)

Pittsburgh Symphony, William Stein-
berg, conductor, November, 1960

San Francisco Symphony, conducted
by the composer, April, 1962

Serenade for Six Instruments (1961), for clarinet,
bassoon, horn, violin, viola and cello

San Francisco State College Chamber
Music Center, January, 1961.

Patterns (1962) for harp.

Aristid von Wurtzler, harp, Hartt
College of Music, West Hartford,
Connecticut, June 1964
Also performed and privately record-
ed by Marcella DeCray.

David Sheinfeld began composing in the 1930's
while working as an orchestral violinist/. However,
he rejected all of his works prior to 1962 except the
following: Etudes for Orchestra and Serenade for
six instruments.

Four Pieces for Solo Cello (1964)

Robert Sayre, cello, Legion of Honor,
San Francisco, May, 1966.

Duo for Viola and Harp (1965)

Rolf Persinger, viola, Marcella De-
Cray, harp, San Francisco Chamber
Music Society, November, 1965.

Dialogues (1966), for chamber orchestra

The Chamber Symphony of Philadel-
phia, Anshel Brusilow, conductor,
in Philadelphia, October, 1966
Lincoln Center, New York, Decem-
ber 1966

Confrontations (1969), for electric guitar, electric
violin, saxophone, and orchestra

Oakland symphony, Gerhard Samuel,
conductor, January, 1970,
San Francisco Symphony, Seiji Oza-
wa, conductor, March, 1972

Memories of Yesterday and Tomorrow (1971), for
three players playing conventional and electric
violins, conventional and electric cellos, and
conventional and muted pianos

The Francesco Trio, San Francisco
Chamber Music Society, March, 1971

Time Warp (1972), for several electric instruments
and orchestra

Commissioned for the sixtieth anni-
versary season of the San Francisco
Symphony
San Francisco Symphony, Seiji Oza-
wa, conductor January, 1973

*Elegiac Sonorities (1973), for organ
 "Commissioned by and dedicated to
 the Congregation Temple Emanu-
 El, San Francisco."
 Premiere performance by Ludwig
 Altman, organ, December 20,
 1973, Temple Emanu-El, San
 Francisco

Dualities (1976) for harp
 Marcella DeCray, Harp, San Fran-
 cisco Chamber Music Society,
 March, 1976

*String Quartet No. 1 (1978)
 Norman Fromm Composers Award
 of the San Francisco Chamber Mu-
 sic Society
 Kronos Quartet, San Francisco Cham-
 ber Music Society, January, 1979
 The Alexander Quartet, The Bath
 Festival of Music (Bath, England;
 composer in residence) June, 1988
 The performance was rebroadcast by the
 BBC several times from 1988 to 1993.

The Earth is a Sounding Board (1978) for orches-
 tra and chorus
 Commissioned by Seiji Ozawa, 1978
 Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, Kent
 Nagano, conductor and The Pacific
 Mozart Ensemble, Richard Grant,
 conductor, 1993

Dreams and Fantasies (1981), for orchestra
 Commissioned by the San Francisco
 Symphony
 San Francisco Symphony, Edo de
 Waart, conductor, Davies Sympho-
 ny Hall, May 1982, and Zellerbach
 Auditorium, Berkeley, May, 1982

Threnody (1981) for solo violin.
 Premiere performance by Roy Malan,
 violin, San Francisco Chamber
 Music Society, February, 1982

*String Quartet No. 2 (1993)
 Commissioned by the Kronos Quartet
 Premier performance January 1994,
 by the Kronos Quartet, Emeryville,
 California.

* indicates scores published by Fallen Leaf Press, Berkeley, California.

This web page was last updated March 20, 1999.

Biography of a Remarkable 20th-Century Composer

David Sheinfeld was born in 1906 to parents who had recently emigrated from the Ukraine and settled in St. Louis. When he was seven, he began studying the violin. Several years later, the family moved to Chicago, where at age thirteen, he began studying harmony and counterpoint and became interested in composing. In 1929 he was awarded a scholarship to study composition at the Academia Santa Cecilia in Rome, in a master class under Ottorino Respighi. Upon his return to Chicago in 1931 he began working as a violinist and writing works for ballet and WPA theater productions.

In 1944, Mr. Sheinfeld joined the Pittsburgh Symphony under Fritz Reiner. The following year he won a position in the first violin section of the San Francisco Symphony under Pierre Monteux, a position he held until his retirement in 1971.

Throughout his career as a performer, Mr. Sheinfeld continued to compose. Monteux and the San Francisco Symphony premiered his *Adagio* and *Allegro* (1947) and *Concerto for Orchestra* (1950). His *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* (1955) was premiered by Anshel Brusilow and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Other works have been premiered by the Aspen Festival Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Oakland Symphony, the Kronos Quartet, the Alexander Quartet, the San Francisco Chamber Music Society, and by the San Francisco Symphony under maestros Ozawa and de Waart.

Recent premieres include his *String Quartet No. 2*, commissioned and performed by the Kronos Quartet (1993); *Dear Theo*, for baritone and chamber ensemble with text from the letters of Vincent van Gogh, commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players (1996); and three major orchestral pieces, *The Earth is a Sounding Board* (1978) for orchestra and small chorus, premiered in 1993; *Polarities*, *Symphony No. 1* (1990), for large orchestra, premiered in 1997; and *E=mc²*, *Symphony No. 2*, for orchestra and string quartet, premiered in 1998; all by the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra under maestro Kent Nagano, with the Alexander Quartet in *E=mc²*.

Mr. Sheinfeld is currently working on a composition for percussion and orchestra for the Berkeley Symphony, and developing *Dear Theo* into a one-act opera.

Awards

David Sheinfeld has been awarded the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Letters Composer Award, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation Award, and the National Endowment for the Arts Composition Grant.

An oral history of David Sheinfeld is on record at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley.

This web page was last updated March 18, 1999.

Comments about David Sheinfeld:

"David Sheinfeld is an incomparable master of the orchestra, and of instrumental writing generally, whose compositions are full of big and striking and altogether original ideas, compellingly and effectively realized. His works derive from a free ranging and exuberant musical fantasy that is always under the control of a superb and masterful craftsman." — American Academy of Arts and Letters [In presenting David Sheinfeld the Award in Music]

"David really has a brilliant mind, a genius — even though that word is so overused in the U.S. He reminds me of composers of the romantic era, with his breadth of knowledge in terms of music, astronomy, the visual arts. It's sophisticated and very thoroughly composed. . . . He's the real thing, someone we'll be playing in a hundred years and someone, in his dedication, who embodies the artistic tradition." — Kent Nagano, conductor, Berkeley Symphony

"Well into his 10th decade, this man of bright, burning light seems very much like one of his favorite particles of primal energy; "you know, scientists can measure the" explains Sheinfeld with delight. "But it's never exactly in the place where they expect it to be." — John Krich, San Francisco Examiner

[Memories of Yesterday and ***] "There was a nice turnabout at the opening program of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. . . . The ***electron ***Tomorrow

oldest of the six composers represented came up with the wildest piece [David Sheinfeld], the youngest was the most cautious." — Robert Commanday, San Francisco Chronicle

[Dreams and Fantasies] "It was a successful premiere of a provocative, original work on a thoroughly splendid program. . . . In a dazzling sequence, Dream episodes that are deliberately vague and changeable, alternate with Fantasies based on single ideas. . . . [The composition] is clearly articulated and always arresting. It is exactly the kind of music that wants and merits repeating." — Robert Commanday, San Francisco Chronicle

[String Quartet No. 1] "There was an embarrassment of riches Monday evening as the San Francisco Chamber Music Society presented a most unusual concert. . . . [String Quartet No. 1] was a fine, effective piece which was absorbing from the first note to last. One hopes to see it as repertory, and soon." — Heuwell Tircuit, San Francisco Chronicle

"Without question David Sheinfeld has been the most important influence in my own creative education. His deep and interdisciplinary approach to the universal elements of form, structure and artistry has allowed me an exploration into the very heart of creative genius. He is truly a Master of his art." — Bettina Gray, Host, The Creative Mind (PBS Television Series)

American Academy of Arts and Letters



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DAVID SHEINFELD

Academy Award in Music

David Sheinfeld is an incomparable master of the orchestra, and of instrumental writing generally, whose compositions are full of big and striking and altogether original ideas, compellingly and effectively realized. His works derive from a free-ranging and exuberant musical fantasy that is always under the control of a superb and masterful craftsman.

May 1993

“E = MC²”

1

I Relativity

David Sheinfeld

Picc. = 76 Picc. 2

Fls. 1-2 f 62

Obs. 1-2 f

B♭ Cl. Eb Cl. 62

Cls. 1-2 f

Hn. 1-2 Horns 1-2 & 2 f

Trb. 1 f

Trb. 2 f

Trb. 3 f

Tuba f

Timpani f

Perc. 2 Small Tam-tam hard sticks ff f

Perc. 3 Large Tam-tam soft mallet ff f nf

Perc. 4 R. Dr. odd f ff f nf

Pno. f

Vln. I = 76 slow gliss. down to an indefinite note.

Vln. II pizz. f

Vle. fast down gliss.

Vc. quasi chrom. gliss. up

Cb. pizz. f

II

Microcosm

Very slow, $\text{♩} = 48$

Ell. horn

Ban. I

Horn I (open)

Horn 3 con sord.

Perc. 4 Bamboo Chimes

Very slow, $\text{♩} = 48$

Harp knock knock

Pno.

Very slow, $\text{♩} = 48$

Vln. I con sord.

Vln. II pizz. pp

Vla. nat.

Vc. sul pont. con sord. sul pont. non vibr.

String Quartet senza sord. nat. ON

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vlc.

Vc.

Cb.

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

E.Horn

Ct.1

Ct.2

Cbass

Horn 1

Horn 2

Horn 3

Horn 4

Tpt.1-2

Tpt.3

Perc.1

Perc.2

Perc.4

Pno.

Vln I

Vln. II

Vla

Vc

String Quartet

Vln.I

Vln. II

Vla

Vc

Ch.

III
"E = MC²"

203

String Quartet

2 3 4 5 6 7

Fl. I
Ob. I
Cl. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

sul pont.
pizz.
sul pont.
arco
bounce

String Quartet

9 10 11 12

Fl. I
Ob. 1-2
Bsn. I
Horn 1
Horn 2
Horn 3
Tpt. I
Tpt. 2
Perc. 2
Perc. 3
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

Ob. 1 f
Ob. 1-2 42
con sord.
Claves
Med. Cowbell f
Lh

pizz.
sul pont.
pizz.
Tutti
(arco)
(pizz.)

2 Stands

13 14 15 16

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

J = 112

Picc.1-2 263 62 264 265 266 267 *accel.* 268 *Plú vivo, J = 112*

Piccs. Xyl. gliss. gliss. Perc. 1 Vib. (off) gliss. Perc. 2 Tom W.Blk. gliss. Perc. 3 Sizzle Cym. Qd^b Perc. 4 to Cym. to B.Dr. l.v.

J = 112 String Quartet *accel.* *Plú vivo, J = 112*

Vln.I Vln.II Vla. Vc. Vn. Vcl. Cb.

263 264 265 266 267 268

String Quartet

269 270 271 272 273 274

Picc.1 Picc.2 Picc.3 Ob.1 Ellorn Cl.1 Horn 1 Lg. Cym. Perc.3 soft sticks B.Dr. Perc.4 Vln.I Vln.II Vc.

(mf) Picc.1 play as fast as possible.

269 270 271 272 273 274

* After Picc.1's last note, the conductor should remain with hands raised for at least 5 beats in the tempo of the last notes of Picc.1

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Caroline Cooley Crawford

Born and raised in La Cañada, California.

Graduated from Stanford University, B.A. in linguistics.

Postgraduate work at University of Geneva, certificate in international law and linguistics.

Degree in keyboard performance from Royal College of Musicians, London.

Copy editor for *Saturday Review Magazine*, 1973-1974.

Staff writer and press officer for San Francisco Opera, 1974-1979.

Co-Director for Peace Corps (Eastern Caribbean), 1980-1983.

Music reviewer for *Palo Alto Times*, *Oakland Tribune*, *Marin Independent Journal*, 1974-present. Published *Prague: Walks with Mozart, Dvorak, and Smetana*, 1995.

Interviewer-editor in music for the Regional Oral History Office, 1985-present. UC Extension instructor in journalism.

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